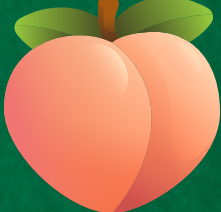


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Expanding Literacy Horizons: Inclusive, Diverse, and Innovative Approaches

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ABSTRACT

The spring 2023 issue of the *Georgia Journal of Literacy*, “Expanding Literacy Horizons: Inclusive, Diverse, and Innovative Approaches,” aims to inspire and inform K–12 literacy educators, researchers, and stakeholders by offering valuable insights, research, and resources. The issue emphasizes collaboration, creativity, and critical reflection and is divided into sections by article type, including a literature review on inclusive literacy ideologies; practitioner articles exploring interdisciplinary approaches, reading aloud, and the use of cluster texts to celebrate diversity in education; and teaching tips offering guidance on organizing author visits, fostering classroom community, and transitioning to digital interactive journals. The issue encourages readers to reflect on how inclusive, diverse, and innovative approaches can be integrated into their practices to create more equitable, dynamic, and engaging learning environments.

KEYWORDS

literacy
advocacy;
editorial; diversity
and inclusion;
innovative
approaches

In an ever-changing landscape of literacy education, it is paramount for educators, researchers, and stakeholders to actively pursue and embrace approaches and strategies that embody our collective commitment to inclusivity, diversity, and innovation (Banks & McGee Banks, 2020; Grote-Garcia & Ortlieb, 2023). The spring 2023 issue of the *Georgia Journal of Literacy*, aptly titled “Expanding Literacy Horizons: Inclusive, Diverse, and Innovative Approaches,” endeavors to serve as a beacon of inspiration and knowledge for a wide array of literacy advocates. From K–12 literacy teachers, teacher educators, and researchers to educational leaders and policymakers, this issue offers literacy advocates a wealth of valuable insights, timely research, and practical resources designed to empower and enrich literacy education across the spectrum.

With an emphasis on collaboration, creativity, and critical reflection, the diverse contributions in this issue aim to ignite meaningful conversations and foster transformative learning experiences within and beyond the classroom. As we navigate the complexities and challenges of literacy education in Georgia and throughout the nation, it is our hope that the ideas, practices, and perspectives presented in this issue will serve as a catalyst for cultivating more inclusive, diverse, and innovative approaches in literacy education, ultimately benefiting learners of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

Literature Review: Inclusive Literacy and Ideologies

Our issue begins with Dr. Alexandra Lampp Berglund's literature review "Diverging Ideologies of Disability: An Examination of Literature on Inclusive Literacy," which delves into the concept of inclusive literacy and its implications for students with disabilities. Through a comprehensive literature review grounded in Critical Disability Studies, Berglund highlights the need for continued research and advocacy in this area. Readers can hope to gain an understanding of how disability ideologies are present in research on inclusive literacy practices, ultimately encouraging educators to consider more inclusive approaches to literacy education.

Practitioner Articles: Bridging Diversity and Innovative Strategies

This issue features three practitioner articles that skillfully bridge diversity and inclusion with innovative teaching strategies. In "A Passion for Fashion: Studying Fashion through Children's Literature," Dr. Sharryn Larsen Walker and Maggie Walker showcase a unique interdisciplinary approach to engage students' interests in the fashion industry. They expertly demonstrate how children's literature can be utilized to build background knowledge, offering readers a wealth of literary resources and strategies that can be integrated into English Language Arts, career education, or arts courses.

Dr. William P. Bintz's insightful article, "Reading Aloud to Children: A Cautionary Tale," serves as a powerful reminder that reading aloud is an art form requiring skill, intentionality, and sensitivity. Through this piece, readers will delve into the complexities of reading aloud, gaining a comprehensive understanding of research on the topic. The article equips educators with a variety of recommended texts and strategies to optimize the benefits of this practice while ensuring that it is inclusive and meaningful for all students.

Finally, in "Beyond the Single Story: Utilizing Cluster Texts to Celebrate Diversity," Dr. Lisa Parker and Jenny Malec emphasize the importance of representation and inclusivity in the texts shared with students. They expertly guide readers through the concepts of intertextuality and cluster texts, offering practical examples of how these resources can be employed to present a rich tapestry of stories and experiences that reflect the diverse world in which we live.

Teaching Tips: Practical Approaches and Innovative Strategies

The final subsection of the issue features three insightful teaching tips pieces that offer practical guidance for educators. In the first article in this section, "Tips for Planning a Successful Author Visit," Drs. Tiffany Watson, Nicole Maxwell, and Danielle Hartsfield share their expertise on organizing and executing memorable author visits. These visits have the potential to inspire students' love for reading and writing, and the authors outline the key steps involved in planning such events. Readers can expect to learn not only how author visits can support learning outcomes but also how to foster an authentic connection with the world of literature through these unique experiences. Additionally, the article delves into strategies for overcoming financial barriers by exploring various funding opportunities that can make these enriching author visits a reality for schools and campuses.

Dr. Kathleen Crawford and Heather Huling present two teaching tips articles. In "Building Classroom Community in Elementary Literacy Methods Courses," they introduce the practice of "Tell Me Time" (TMT), an adaptation of morning meetings that fosters connection and communication among students. Readers will discover specific examples of TMT activities and learn how to successfully implement this practice in their courses. Crawford and Huling's second

article, “Out with the Old, in with the New: Digital Interactive Journals in an Elementary Language Arts Methods Course,” explores the transition from traditional to digital interactive journals. Readers can expect practical guidance on implementing this strategy in the classroom and learn how to integrate technology into literacy instruction.

Final Reflections

This issue of the *Georgia Journal of Literacy* presents a diverse array of perspectives and insights on literacy education, with the overarching aim of inspiring readers to broaden their own horizons and foster meaningful learning experiences for all students. We are deeply grateful for the invaluable contributions of our authors, as we believe that their collective work will ignite meaningful change within the realm of literacy education.

As you delve into the articles in this issue, we encourage you to contemplate the myriad ways in which inclusive, diverse, and innovative approaches can be seamlessly woven into your own practice. Reflect on the strategies and resources our authors have thoughtfully presented, and ponder how they might be adapted or tailored to suit your unique context (Cremin et al., 2022). By embracing the spirit of collaboration and the shared pursuit of knowledge, we can all contribute to the creation of more equitable, dynamic, and engaging learning environments for our students.

It is our hope that “Expanding Literacy Horizons: Inclusive, Diverse, and Innovative Approaches” will prompt you to challenge traditional assumptions, welcome novel ideas, and continually evolve as a literacy advocate. As we collectively strive for a more inclusive, diverse, and innovative future within literacy education, the *Georgia Journal of Literacy* remains steadfast in its commitment to support you on this transformative journey.

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Diverging Ideologies of Disability: A Critique of Literature on Inclusive Literacy

Alexandra Lampp Berglund

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ABSTRACT

Although the concept of literacy has continued to evolve through the work of innovative scholars and educators, conventional understandings of literacy still abound within published scholarship. Pushing past these traditional notions of literacy, a small subset of scholars has advocated for a broadened conceptualization of literacy. Labeled inclusive literacy, this relatively new approach to literacy draws from both socially and cultural situated literacy practices (Street, 1984) and multimodal literacy practices (Kress & VanLeeuwen, 2001), as it takes into account diverse symbol systems and acknowledges literacy's part in daily practices. Further, inclusive literacy values all literacy experiences and works to include children with disabilities, a group that is so often overlooked in regard to literacy learning (Flewitt et al., 2009). Grounded in Critical Disability Studies and language ideology theories, this literature review seeks to explore the diverging disability ideologies found in research published on inclusive literacy practices and the ways researchers position students with disabilities. Specifically, this analysis examines the myriad ways scholars take up or fail to acknowledge the term disability as a means to understand the ways that language use is connected to disability ideologies (Irvine & Gal, 2000).

KEYWORDS

inclusive literacy;
disability; Critical
Disability Studies;
language
ideology

Leu et al. (2013) wrote that literacy “becomes new every day of our lives” (p. 1150). However, despite literacy’s continual evolution, understandings of literacy defined by only written and print text persist (Lawson et al., 2012). Taking note of literacy’s transformation and children’s literacy engagement in different social contexts, New Literacy Studies (NLS) theorists have advocated for a broadened conceptualization of literacy (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011; Street, 1984). Particularly, NLS research has recognized the existence of multiple literacies and views literacy as the “socially recognized ways in which people generate, communicate, and negotiate meanings” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2011, p. 33). A small subset of scholars has worked to expand the socially situated and multifaceted understanding of literacy first promoted by NLS. This expansion considers diverse symbol systems and the multiple modes involved in meaning making (Lawson et al., 2012). Labeling this approach *inclusive literacy*, these same scholars’ visions go further than those associated with NLS, as they have advocated for pushing against traditional notions of literacy and sought to include children with disabilities by valuing all literacy experiences (Flewitt et al., 2009). In this way, inclusive literacy promotes inclusivity in both the literacy practices and learners it supports.

Promoting inclusivity, much of the published scholarship on inclusive literacy has presented diverging ideological constructions of disability. The ideologies infused within this research align with different models of disability and derive from varying theoretical positions.

These ideological differences have the potential to impact practicing educators' understandings of inclusivity that ground these inclusive literacy practices. To uncover the array of ideologies of disability woven into research conducted on inclusive literacy, a critique of the literature is warranted. Specifically, a critical exploration that considers how scholars employ the term *disability* is needed to understand ideologies of disability.

This pairing of inclusive literacy and disability promotes the collective goals of the field of Critical Disability Studies (CDS). CDS lies in ideological opposition to the “entrenched pseudo-scientific foundations of special education” that dominate much of the available research on students with disabilities (Connor et al., 2014, p. 6). Highlighting research on inclusive literacy in the field of language and literacy education “provid[es] evidence” of CDS “at work,” and “in action” (Connor et al., 2014, p. 6). Additionally, analyzing the use of the term disability within the literature allows us to understand the ways that language use is inherently and deeply connected to ideologies of disability. This critique also draws on the scholarship of Irvine and Gal (2000), Cavanaugh (2020), and Hasselbacher (2018) situated within the field of language ideology, to continually enforce the important connections between literacy, language use, and ideology.

Using a theoretical framework of CDS and language and ideology, the following research question guides this critique: In what ways do authors of scholarship on inclusive literacy employ the term *disability*? However, before examining the extant published research, the theoretical, historical, and cultural conditions that have sparked the creation of the concept of inclusive literacy must be explored. The following sections serve to situate the literature firmly within these contexts. First, the prominent influences that have shaped and informed inclusive literacy are reviewed. Additionally, this initial exploration of inclusive literacy is key in understanding inclusive literacy as a separate concept and how it differs from the influential tenets of NLS. Further, this explanation will help illuminate the ways that NLS does not serve as a grounding theory for this critique. Rather, NLS serves as a reference and starting point for introducing the history of inclusive literacy. Next, the theories that frame the review are discussed, as each section is guided by this theoretical alignment. Within the Theoretical Framework section, an intertwined view of CDS and language ideology is presented. Before presenting the findings of this review, the specific methods used to carefully craft this review are included. Finally, the findings reveal the multiple ways that disability both is and is not featured in the literature. Further, the findings highlight how this language use is inherently tied to ideologies of disability. Understanding these connections can have significant impacts on educators, and these implications are explored in the concluding section.

What is Inclusive Literacy?

The concept of inclusive literacy initially arose from educators' quest to provide a quality education to students with disabilities, as “inclusive *policies* only find meaning in inclusive *practices*” (Nutbrown & Clough, 2009, p. 192). Instead of excluding students from literacy activities that can position literacy solely “as a curricular goal” and “the development of skills-based reading and writing competences” (Flewitt et al., 2009, p. 212), educators have continually expanded the notion of literacy often promoted in their classrooms. Aligning with this expansion, inclusive literacy does not view literacy simply as a “set of technical skills concerned with reading and writing” but as “embedded in social practice” (Flewitt et al., 2009, p. 213). Drawing from Street's (1984) socially and culturally situated literacy practices and Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2001) concept of multimodal literacy, inclusive literacy offers a way to consider meaning making that moves beyond talk and written text to include “multiple ‘modes’ of communication, such as

gesture, gaze, movement, body positioning, words, vocalizations, and alternative and augmentative communications systems, including sign, symbol, and formal programs” (Flewitt et al., 2009, p. 214). Through this broadened understanding of literacy, students can be provided with differentiated and *inclusive* instruction that meets the needs of all students, including those with disabilities (Milton, 2017b).

To expand on the foundational concepts that frame inclusive literacy and how inclusive literacy generatively builds upon these influences, Street’s (1984) and Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (2001) groundbreaking research is briefly reviewed. Street (1984) presented an understanding of literacy as “a shorthand for the social practices and conceptions of reading and writing” (p. 1). Through this lens, literacy, again, is viewed as multiple practices, rather than a static, singular entity. In Street’s work, literacy encompasses practices that accomplish the same purposes of reading and writing but occur organically, both culturally and socially, as individuals communicate and make meaning in their daily lives. Inclusive literacy draws from this notion that literacy can be varied and is unique, based on context, and that knowledge is co-constructed in social contexts (Milton, 2017b).

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001), too, brought forward a broadened conceptualization of literacy with their theory of multimodality and highlight the multiple modes that people can and do use to make meaning. Building on Street’s (1984) influential research that explores the social nature of meaning making, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) explained that the different modes used by individuals to communicate are “forms within the various sign systems that carry the meanings that a social collective recognizes and understands” (Albers & Harste, 2007, p. 11). Further, as Jewitt et al. (2016) shared, multimodality “marks a departure from the traditional opposition of ‘verbal’ and ‘non-verbal’ communication” (p. 3). This view of literacy acknowledges the value that has been previously placed on verbal communication and upends the verbal/nonverbal binary. Inclusive literacy is built on the foundation of this acknowledgement, as it includes multiple modes that move past the singular mode of verbal communication and considers the various means of communication that students with disabilities use, far beyond verbal utterances.

Inclusive literacy differs from Street’s (1984) and Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (2001) theory of multimodality and research in the way that it specifically advocates for individuals with disabilities right to literacy. Further, inclusive literacy is grounded in the understanding that literacy is a human right, particularly for children as they grow, develop, and make meaning of the world around them in different and yet still powerful ways. Proponents of inclusive literacy seek to ensure that all students are granted these rights, specifically through the continual reconsideration of literacy and the quest to understand literacy’s complexities and all that it can entail. The emphasis placed on acceptance creates the unique concept of inclusive literacy.

Educational stakeholders can foster inclusive literacy in a variety of ways. The consideration of multimodal literacy, first introduced by NLS scholars, serves as the first step toward inclusion. However, more than simply considering multimodal literacy is needed, as stressed by Flewitt et al., (2009). Flewitt et al. (2009) highlights that creating an inclusive environment, practicing consistency in activities, holding high expectations of students’ development, and building relationships are all crucial elements in supporting inclusive literacy. While the influences of NLS are notable in inclusive literacy, these additional critical behaviors set inclusive literacy apart from other scholarship within the field.

Theoretical Framework

CDS serves to uniquely frame this review of the literature on inclusive literacy, as CDS offers a view of disability that is tied to societal, historical, and cultural conceptualizations. Language ideology, or beliefs about language, connects language use and social organization (Hasselbacher, 2018; Piller, 2015; Silverstein, 1979). CDS then provides a means to interpret and analyze these social organizations through the lens of varying models of disability. To understand the points of convergence between these two complimentary theories, each is explored, as is its relevancy to inclusive literacy.

Critical Disability Studies (CDS)

Disability studies, more broadly, draws from a range of disciplines, including psychology, education, sociology, and policy and cultural studies, and focuses on the phenomena of disability and ability in relation to political and social categorizations (Goodley, 2014). Within this larger field, CDS is a response to the *critical turn* coupled with disability activism and seeks to include new paradigms to continually reconceptualize the disability experience. These influences can be traced to postconventionalist, poststructural, postcolonial, feminist, queer, and crip theories. Similar to these schools of thought, CDS challenges scholars of disability theory to rethink material constructions of the body within society (Goodley et al., 2019; Shildrick, 2012). In addition to the influence of these prominent theories, one can see how CDS is infused with and informed by critical pedagogy, as the goal of CDS is to promote education as a means to resist preconceived societal norms surrounding disability (Goodley, 2014). The transformative understandings of embodiment within CDS position disability as “part of a multiplicity of possibilities,” rather than a marked difference or deficit (Shildrick, 2012, p. 31).

As CDS is a subfield within disability studies, the models within disability studies that have shaped disability into a complex and everchanging concept are important to consider. These differing models are represented in the literature on inclusive literacy included and serve as the basis for the subsequent analysis and organization of this critique. The medical model of disability, often viewed as the “normative” model of disability, employs medical discourse in which disability is read “solely through biological, genetic, hormonal, neurological, and physiological language” (Goodley, 2014, p. 4). Opposing this model, the social model of disability pushes against the concept of impairment constructed by the medicalization of disability. Further, the social model of disability attempts to break down the social, economic, and cultural barriers that are created to prevent those with perceived impairments from participating in a variety of social activities (Goodley, 2014). Simply put, the concept of a disabling society is problematized, rather than disability itself. Lastly, postconventional models of disability developed from postmodern and poststructural theory (Shildrick, 2012). These models deconstruct the epistemological and discursive forces that shape the lived disability experience.

As these models of disability are reviewed, it is imperative to note that their progression is not meant to be presented in a linear way. Instead, as evidenced in the literature featured in this critique, these models all exist simultaneously and are taken up in a variety of settings. Many scholars, activists, and individuals within the disability community both champion and discourage the use of different models. No one model can serve as “final answers” to questions surrounding disability, because, as Shildrick (2012) asserted, “the work of critique is to keep alive the very process in which questions itself generates new potential” (p. 31). In this way, CDS, including its many varying models, is a means to examine why individual ideologies may be used in a particular context and what factors may have informed and shaped these ideologies.

Language Ideologies

Language ideology is commonly defined as a set of language beliefs and is infused with numerous connotations. As Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) shared, the use of the term *ideology* acknowledges the cultural, historical, and social influences exerted upon language and the inherent power of these forces. Moreover, following poststructural lines of inquiry, the term also reminds scholars that these same cultural, historical, and social forces are “partial, contestable and contested, and interest-laden” (Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994, p. 58). Interested specifically in language, Silverstein (1979) promoted that language ideologies are “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (p. 193). Language ideologies help speakers understand the relationships between language and their use (Cavanaugh, 2020).

While language is the predominant focus of much of the field of language ideology, a small, yet emergent, community of scholars call for an examination of the ways that literacy, in addition to language use, shapes ideologies (Bhattacharya & Sterponi, 2020; Hasselbacher, 2018; Ochs et al., 2005; Phuong, 2017; Volk & Angelova, 2007). These researchers have employed a critical approach that borrows features from discourse analysis to feature an understanding of literacy and language use that “is not limited to talk and text” (Phuong, p. 51) and “refers to any number of semiotic systems . . . rather than an individual’s ability to use one in particular” (Hasselbacher, 2018, p. 72). This expansion doesn’t attempt to conflate literacy with language. Instead, these scholars hoped to emphasize the connection between language and literacy and the ways they generatively build upon and inform one another. Further, the consideration of literacy within language ideologies presents an exciting opportunity to weave together CDS and language ideology, because, as Phuong (2017) shared, CDS and language ideology “are rarely discussed in tandem,” despite disability and language ideology being similarly laden with cultural and social influences and struggles of power (p. 51). Further, so many within the disability community communicate in ways that stretch far beyond talk and text. In this critique, I align with this group of language ideology scholars that have promoted this inclusivity.

Understanding various ideologies surrounding disability informs how disability is framed in multiple educational settings, including but not limited to literacy education and the research published within these fields. Throughout this critique of the literature on inclusive literacy practice, language ideologies ground the analysis of research on inclusive literacy, while CDS serves as a more specific way to examine why individual ideologies may be used in a particular context and how these ideologies are made evident through literacy engagement and language use.

Conceptualizing the Complex

Inclusion, literacy, and disability each do not have one commonly accepted definition. Instead, they are entities whose meanings change based on their context. To form my own understandings of these terms while critiquing the literature available, I use CDS and language ideologies as frameworks to define these complex terms. I begin with the term literacy to ground my work in the larger field of language and literacy education and then move on to the concept of inclusion to similarly situate my work among previous notable scholarship in CDS. Lastly, the continually evolving concept of disability is unpacked to introduce the ways that the term can and is employed across the literature published on inclusive literacy.

Literacy. Leu et al. (2013) proclaimed that literacy “defines both who we are and who we shall become” (p. 115). Society collectively informs the ways that literacy is conceptualized, as

needs for producing and consuming texts change and evolve. Literacy, in turn, also shapes who we are, as it defines the ways that we can and will communicate with others. Literacy has continually been linked with societal needs (Monaghan & Hartman, 2000), and, with each piece cited in this critique, a different view of society and, thus, a different ideology of literacy is presented. Each author and researcher whose work is featured understood and placed various degrees of importance on gender, race, class, and, obviously, ability, as literacy has long “been influenced by these shifting currents” (Monaghan & Hartman, 2000, p. 111). Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) echoed how ideologies of literacy have long relied on social institutions and that “the definition of what is and what is not literacy is always a profoundly political matter” (p. 66).

Scholars have made evident that no one understanding of literacy can be separated from the forces that have informed it. In this sense, my own definition of literacy is colored by the myriad forces that have shaped and formed it and is still continually evolving. Most noticeably, CDS and inclusive literacy have shaped the ways I view literacy. Within this work and in my own life, I define literacy not just as written text or spoken language. Literacy can encompass bodily movements and gestures, pictures drawn by hand or using computer software, and so much more. In this way, I view literacy as making meaning across multiple mediums, mirroring the underlying tenets of inclusive literacy.

Inclusion. As the concept of inclusive literacy is explored, a focus on the term *inclusion* as it relates to educational and, more specifically, classroom practices, is crucial. Much of the research featured in this analysis of the literature focuses on the practical implications of inclusive literacy, so this consideration is key when unpacking the ideologies of scholars who support inclusive literacy. More specifically, inclusive education serves as a driving force of inclusive literacy. However, in different contexts, inclusion can be defined quite differently. Within the United States, the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1975 sought to guarantee that eligible students with disabilities are provided a “free and appropriate public school education in the least restrictive environment,” commonly abbreviated as FAPE and LRE (U. S. Department of Education, n.d.). IDEA, then, seeks to control how state and public agencies provide particular educational services to the disability community, including early intervention and special education programs. or equitable access and inclusion for all children within digital spaces.

However, despite this widespread government support, local schools grapple with the interpretation and implementation of this legislation and the *appropriateness* of the services offered vary widely (Colker, 2013; Sack, 2000). With this ambiguity, teachers and administrators alike are left wondering how to best educate their students with disabilities and, ultimately the meaning of inclusion. This uncertainty is prevalent throughout published research on inclusive literacy. Researchers vary in their interpretations, and much of the research has viewed inclusion, particularly in regard to literacy, as a right (Barratt-Pugh et al., 2017; Flewitt et al., 2009; Kliever et al., 2006; Lawson et al., 2012; Milton, 2017b), a way to reconceptualize literacy (Lacey et al., 2007; Lawson et al., 2012, Milton, 2017a; Milton, 2017b; Oakley, 2017; Price-Dennis et al., 2015), and the outcome of desegregating classrooms (Barratt-Pugh et al., 2017; Milton, 2017b; Price-Dennis et al, 2015).

Disability. As with inclusion, much legislation has sought to define disability. For instance, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a prominent piece of legislation in the United States,

legally defines *disability* as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity” (ADA National Network, n.d., para. 2). Further, this definition includes disability can be either “recorded” or “regarded” (ADA National Network, n.d., para. 2). The ADA’s notion of “regarded as having a disability” aligns with the commonly accepted understanding of disability as a social phenomenon, and impairment serves as the central tenet of this definition. Contrastingly, having a “record of” a disability entails “that the person has a history of or has been misclassified as having a mental or physical impairment... even though the person does not currently have a disability” (ADA National Network, n.d., para. 1). Within my work, I use the ADA’s concept of a “regarded” disability. With this definition, I consider individuals own personal interpretation of their disability.

In addition to honoring the voices of the disability community in my definition of disability, I do the same with the discursive representation of disability. While many scholars often use the term *dis/ability* or *(dis)ability* to represent the postmodern or poststructural theories that informs their work, both scholars (Linton, 2017; Overboe, 1999; Shildrick, 2012; Titchkosky, 2006) and activists (Ableism Is Trash, 2022; Autistic Truth, 2022; Disability Reframed, 2021; Talk Disability, 2021; NeuroDifferent, 2022) within the disability community simply use *disability*. This decision aligns with one of the integral components of the disability rights movement: Nothing About Us Without Us (Charlton, 1998). With this alignment, I acknowledge and listen to the disability community on disability issues (Disability Reframed, 2021; Talk Disability, 2021).

Research Methods

To begin the process of gathering research on inclusive literacy, I sought to deeply understand the concepts that would serve as my primary search terms: *inclusion*, *literacy*, and *disability*. These keywords are relevant and were chosen with intent. Maxwell (2006) defined keywords as terms “that have important implications for the design, conduct, or interpretation of the study, not simply those that deal with the topic, or in the defined field or substantive area, of the research” (p. 28). Following Maxwell’s guidance, each of these keywords informed and subsequently guided the review of the literature.

After determining the keywords, *literac** AND *inclus**, I began my search of six electronic databases, including Academic Search Complete, EBSCOHost, Education Research Complete, ERIC, PsychINFO, and SOCINDEX with Full Text. I conducted this search in three different phases to discover how the term *disability* has been used within published research on inclusive literacy. Each phase was documented extensively by recording the results of each individual search and listing commonalities found among the pieces featured and noting studies of interest. The numerical results from this initial phase of the search presented 17,788 peer-reviewed journal articles. To narrow the search significantly and to bound the search within the field of education, the keyword *educat** was added and produced significantly less results: 8,505 published pieces. During the third and final phase, the key word *disabilit** was added to align the search with the research question posed. This search highlighted 1,121 peer-reviewed academic journal articles, with only 171 being research reports.

Sharing the results from these three searches provides a wider scope to this critique by highlighting the vast amount of research that has been conducted that focuses on inclusive literacy. Additionally, this presentation of data displays the significantly smaller amount of research that examines inclusive literacy that explicitly involve and include students with disabilities. The final search, with only 171 publications, provided a basis for the next step in the process of reviewing the available literature. I determined whether each article did, in fact, describe inclusive literacy

and students with disabilities by completing a “quality screening” that helped me to “narrow the search by identifying the best available studies” for this particular review (Fink, 2014, p. 49). I then transferred the identifying information of each “quality” piece to a literature management system. This screening allowed me to narrow by focus by reviewing 10 studies in total.

The goal in crafting an organizational scheme was to determine the types of research featured and to assist in the process of close reading. This system included the following: article citation, purpose, theoretical framework, methodology, definition of inclusion, definition of (dis)ability, findings and key arguments, and a “so what” category. The “so what” category allowed me to explicate what stood out in each piece and primary takeaways (Bhattacharya, n.d.). Additionally, by analyzing the research in this way invited me to “note differences in how a variable is measured across studies” (Galvin & Galvin, 2017, p. 73). In this critique, the variable measured across studies is the myriad ways that disability is employed in research published on inclusive literacy.

Findings

Employing the term *disability* is no simple task, as explored extensively in the sections above. Multifaceted and complex, disability, as a concept, actively resists the use of one specific label or definition that can be used in all contexts (Shildrick, 2012). Within the context of the literature reviewed, two common themes are found in the ways that researchers attempt to employ the term disability: *omission of the term disability when identifying students* and *promoting the participation of students with disabilities*. These themes speak to the institutional discourses found within the scholarship and the ways these discourses reflect larger societal beliefs or ideologies (Cavanaugh, 2020).

Avoidance of the Term Disability

First and foremost, no published pieces explicitly defined disability, but these same publications defined literacy, inclusion, and inclusive literacy. The scholars’ attention to clearly defining literacy, inclusion, and inclusive literacy may be attributed to their selected publication outlets and foci. Additionally, authors may have made assumptions of a shared understanding of what is meant by the term disability within a particular discipline. Many of the cited pieces were featured in journals originating in the fields of special education and inclusive education, and these disciplines often focus on issues surrounding disability but not literacy engagement. For instance, within the *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs*, Lacey et al. (2007) acknowledged that, for students with disabilities, “conventional literacy could be seen as irrelevant” (p. 149). With this acknowledgement, Lacey et al. (2007) needed to define conventional literacy and how it differs from inclusive literacy. However, defining disability didn’t work toward achieving the goal of Lacey et al.’s (2007) research which was to seek out and share examples of teaching and learning practices that include students with disabilities. While these reasons for omission may align with disciplinary norms or authors’ intentions, the scholars’ exclusion of an explicit definition of disability is striking, as disability is inherently bound within definitions of inclusion and inclusive literacy.

Despite the absence of an explicit definition of disability, researchers’ language use signals their ideological positioning in regard to disability. While four scholars did employ the term *disability* (Barratt-Pugh, 2017; Flewitt et al., 2009; Kliwer et al., 2006; Milton, 2017a), five authors chose not to use the term disability in their work and instead used terms that still signal disability in various ways, either employing an asset-based or deficit lens (Lacey et al., 2017;

Lawson et al., 2012; Oakley, 2017; Price-Dennis et al., 2015; Valtierra & Siegel, 2019). This avoidance is notable and aligns with the “underlying attitudes, values, and subconscious prejudices and fears that ground a persistent, albeit often unspoken intolerance” of people with disabilities that permeates society and, more specifically educational spaces (Shildrick, 2012, p. 35). The terms that were used to signal disability deficiently include the following: *students with severe learning difficulties* (SLD; Lacey et al., 2007; Lawson et al., 2012); *learners with diverse needs* (Oakley, 2017); and *special education students* (Price-Dennis et al., 2015). The term associated with an asset-based stance is *academically diverse learners* (Valtierra & Siegel, 2019).

Used most frequently in the literature, the term *students with SLD* derived from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that divides literacy into five levels, ranging from the first level that includes “people with very poor skills” to levels four and five that seek to categorize “people who demonstrate command of higher-order information processing skills” (Lacey et al., 2007, p. 149). The OECD is an international organization that works alongside governments, policy makers, and citizens to establish “evidence-based international standards and find solutions to a range of social, economic, and environmental challenges” (OECD, n.d.). The data produced from literacy research conducted by the OECD has implications in 38 countries around the world, but not without criticism. Specifically, within the United States, the data is used to determine the need for additional educational opportunities and targeted instruction for students across grade levels. With its varying levels, the OECD’s literacy scale has created an international standard for literacy skills and employs a deficit-based lens that focuses on what students cannot do in regard to conventional literacy practices, rather than focusing on multimodal literacy engagement. This rating system excludes and sets students apart from their peers, and the specific words used to describe the literacy levels are connotative of the damaging discourses and normative views associated with the medical model of disability that sees disability as deficient (Haegele & Hodge, 2016). In the medical model, “it is the medical diagnosis (and not the individualized needs of the child) that determines the available placement for the child” (Haegele & Hodge, p. 196). Similar discourses circulate around high-stakes literacy assessments that inform literacy levels such as these that seek to uphold “normative” standards (Erevelles, 2012). Within the featured scholarship, students with SLD were understood simply as one level of a larger literacy scale, not as individual, capable learners who can and do enjoy engaging in literacy. By not acknowledging disability, the term *students with severe learning difficulties* (SLD) focuses on difficulties rather than the possibilities and potentiality that is bound within disability (Goodley et al., 2019).

Attempting to acknowledge the multidimensional nature of disability, *diversity* is often used as a placeholder for disability, as seen through the use of the terms, *learners with diverse needs* (Oakley, 2017) and *academically diverse learners* (Valtierra & Siegel, 2019). Oakley (2017) did not define what was meant by the term *learners with diverse needs* and instead cited that the focus of the piece was the benefits of using technology with students with disabilities. Oakley (2017) further shared, “A major use of technology has been drills and games for struggling children to ‘remedy’ their learning difficulties or close the gap in the basics of phonological awareness and letter sound correspondences” (p. 162). With this goal clearly presented, one can infer that Oakley equated learners with diverse needs with students with disabilities. Exploring the implications of the use of the term *learners with diverse needs* presents the opportunity to unpack the complicated history of the term *special needs*, as the two terms are similar in many ways. Special needs, once the preferred term by many within the disability community and beyond, has fallen from favor (Shildrick, 2012). Explaining this shift in discourse, Linton (2017) wrote that *special* “can be

understood as a euphemistic formulation, obscuring the reality that neither the children or education are considered desirable and that they are not thought to surpass what is common” (p. 164). *Needs*, as included in the term special needs and learners with diverse needs, is also complex and can work to position individuals as lesser than. Disability Reframed (2021) shared, “The needs of disabled people are not special. They are not extra, nor are they exceptional. They are human.” However, by employing the term learners with diverse needs, Oakley (2017) positioned particular students’ needs as exceptional, rather than focusing on required accommodations that must be provided to ensure disabled students’ full participation in literacy learning.

Valtierra and Siegel (2019) briefly explained their reasoning for using the term *academically diverse learners*. They used the term to encompass the variety of students featured in their study, one of which was a student with a diagnosed disability. Specifically, the students selected for the study were “one typically developing reader, one struggling reader receiving special education services, and one non-heritage English speaker,” and these students were chosen to emphasize the benefits of inclusive literacy for all learners, not just students with disabilities (Valtierra & Siegel, 2019, p. 115). This consideration regarding the language used is valuable, as is Valtierra and Siegel’s (2019) aim to “shift narrow, ability-oriented dispositions toward literacy to more expansive and inclusive conceptualizations” (p. 119). In this context, inclusivity values all learners, and inclusive literacy seeks to ensure an equitable and empowering education for all.

Promoting the Participation of Students with Disabilities

As evidenced in the previously cited studies, a noticeable group of scholars did not employ the term disability in their work. The scholars who did use the term disability did not define disability, despite the complexity disability presents as a concept. However, two of these same scholars did situate their work within CDS, particularly the social model of disability (Flewitt et al., 2009; Kliwer et al., 2006). This theoretical alignment signals the critical nature of their research, a stark contrast to the scholarship cited above. This criticality serves as the foundation of CDS and represents “a sense of self-appraisal” that seeks to reflect and assess where we, as a society, have come from, where we are at, and where we might be going (Goodley, 2013, p. 632). In particular, CDS “rethink[s] the conventions, assumptions, and aspirations of research, theory, and activism” regarding disability (Goodley, 2013, p. 632). The progression and evolution of the models of disability within CDS serves as an example of this reflection and reassessment. Transformative views of disability have continually given ways to new models of disability. For instance, the medical model is often positioned in contrast to the social model, while the social model has served as the foundation for postconventional models of disability (Haegele & Hodge, 2016). The literature on students with disabilities in the field of language and literacy education reflects these changes, as a growing body of research is grounded within the social model of disability (Flewitt et al., 2009; Kliwer et al., 2006). According to Goodley (2014) and Haegele and Hodge (2016), the social model of disability is the most prevalent model of disability and frequently employed by scholars across disciplines.

The popularity of the social model of disability can be seen in research published on inclusive literacy, as the social model of disability is only the theoretical model of disability evident in the scholarship (Flewitt et al., 2009; Kliwer et al., 2006). The use of the social model, in these contexts, is significant. In addition to being a well-known model of disability within CDS and disability activism, the social model of disability, as its name indicates, is primarily concerned within societal understandings of disability and brings issues of disability into conversations concerning social constructions, practices, and institutions (Kliwer et al., 2006). The social model

of disability focuses on how society continually imposes the concept of disability on individuals with impairments (Haegele & Hodge, 2016). Specifically, when using this model, authors address the ways that disability has been set up “as a political category” and “the social, economic, and cultural barriers that prevent people with impairments from living a life like their non-impaired brothers and sisters” (Goodley, 2014, p. 7). Within this body of research, these social, political, economic, and cultural barriers include access to education, literacy, and communication opportunities (Flewitt et al., 2009).

Flewitt et al. (2009) framed their work within the social model of disability to align with the stance of NLS that situates literacy as a sociocultural practice. In this way, both disability and literacy are concepts that are formed by social and cultural perceptions. Focusing on early literacy experiences, this group of researchers sought to explore different understandings of literacy and how associated literacy practices could expand “young children’s participation in different social and communicative opportunities” found in the home and at school (Flewitt et al., 2009, p. 215). Kliewer et al. (2006), more broadly, addressed the larger social institutions for which reconceptualizing literacy can prove to be more difficult. Suggesting one way to combat oppressive social barriers, Kliewer et al. (2006) proposed that “presuming competence and rightful citizenship in areas such as literacy development and facilitated communication may promote understanding” (p. 170) among individuals both with and without disabilities. *Presuming competence* and *literate citizenship* both work in opposition to the social impositions that act as barriers for children with disabilities to fully participate in literacy practices. Presuming competence challenges educators to expand their understandings of competence and find multiple and new ways for students to demonstrate competence and engaging and connecting with others (Kliewer et al., 2006). Inherently connected to presuming competence, presuming literate citizenship ensures the literate visibility of individuals with disabilities so that they may fully participate in literacy-based activities that ultimately facilitate full participation in society, more broadly (Kliewer et al., 2006). As Kliewer et al. (2006) explained, literacy is a “critical tool of community participation” (p. 177). In order for individuals to make vital connections with others in their communities, they must be able to express themselves. Literacy facilitates this communication across multiple modes.

Conclusion

Although all the research included in this critique has the common goal of fostering inclusive literacy, diverging uses of the term *disability* and, thus, ideologies of disability exist in the scholarship. These differences are not surprising, as they are indicative of the contrasting conceptions of disability that exist within the field of language and literacy education and, largely, society. Understanding the complexities surrounding discourses of disability has widespread implications for educators, particularly those who are in the field and can readily apply the principles of inclusive literacy in their own unique contexts. The knowledge gained through this critical exploration of research on inclusive can inform language use and then, in turn, shape ideologies of disability.

Most noticeably, understanding ideologies of disability, including our own and others’, can create educational spaces that are more inclusive and accessible sites where students with disabilities can participate more fully. Gardland-Thomson (2017) presented the concept of *academic activism* within the field of CDS. Academic activism is “the activism of integrating education” and creating inclusive learning environments for students with disabilities (p. 377). This concept is supported by the belief that “scholars and teachers shape the communal knowledge

and the archive that is disseminated from kindergarten to the university,” and educational stakeholders serve as the grassroots movement working toward equitable education for students within the disability community (Garland-Thomson, 2017, p. 377). Through academic activism, educators can help to break down the cultural, social, economic, and historical barriers that students face when attempting to participate more fully in their classrooms and society, as highlighted by the concept of inclusive literacy.

The presence of CDS, and, more specifically, the social model of disability, and the active acknowledgement of the complexity and diversity of the disability experience within the research, though, serves as a hopeful reminder that there are educators and scholars who think critically and carefully about their language use and the ways that language and power are intimately related (Cavanagh, 2020). As Sandoval Gomez and McKee (2020) shared, CDS can help educators “understand the ‘why’ of inclusive education and equality” and help them determine how to move forward and take action (p. 2). The actions that teachers can take vary based on a number of contextual factors, including grade level, administrative support, and the resources available. However, practical applications of incorporating CDS into one’s pedagogical practices and teaching philosophy include, first, reflecting on our own language use. This critique asks us to pause and ask the follow questions: *Do I avoid using the term disability? How does my language use promote the participation of students with disabilities in my educational spaces?* The answers to these introspections can, then, guide future language use.

In addition to reflecting on and shifting the language and terms we use in regard to our students with disabilities, promoting CDS to colleagues and students through workshops and curriculum is critical. These opportunities can prompt deep, communal, and individual reflections on biases about disability and what larger social, cultural, political, economic, and historical forces have shaped these understandings (Schalk, 2017; Ware & Hatz, 2016). Third, teachers can presume competence in their students and their families. By presuming competence, teachers can push against deficient views of students with disabilities and broaden the scope of how students and their families participate in classroom communities and society more broadly (Kleekamp, 2020; Klierer et al., 2006; Valtierra & Siegel, 2019).

In addition to these applications of CDS, teachers can also listen to and center the voices of the disability community in their classroom materials and beyond through humanizing and accurate portrayals (Wong, 2020). However, as Wong (2020) asserts, “And yet while representation is exciting and important, it is not enough . . . *We all should expect more. We all deserve more*” (p. xxi; emphasis in original). While inclusion in materials is important, inclusion in regard to literacy engagement is paramount. Inclusive literacy, at its core, seeks to challenge social hierarchies that govern the ways that literacy is conceptualized, and the language used when writing about inclusive literacy should, too, seek to push against these long held institutions in regard to disability.

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A Passion for Fashion: Studying Fashion through Children's Literature

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ABSTRACT

Many middle and high school students used the internet during the pandemic to delve more deeply into their interests. One of those areas was the exploration of the fashion industry. However, some students may need more background knowledge of this \$15 billion industry. This article aims to explore the fashion industry through children's literature. Reviews of fashion biographies, how-to books, reference books, and strategy suggestions are presented. Teachers may use the ideas in English/Language Arts, Career and Technical Education, or Arts courses.

KEYWORDS

art education,
career/technical
education,
children's
literature,
fashion, social
media, teaching
strategies

The fashion industry is one area that saw a rise in social media influence during the pandemic, with many middle and high school students turning to the internet and social media as creative outlets (Laffier et al., 2021). Budding designers and stylists created their own media channels, blogs, and other social media accounts to share their creations and develop a following as an influencer (Meisels, 2021), defined by Geyser (2021) as:

people who have built a reputation for their knowledge and expertise on a specific topic. They make regular posts about that topic on their preferred social media channels and generate large followings of enthusiastic, engaged people who pay close attention to their views.

These influencer accounts were worth \$15 billion in 2022 (Bannigan & Shane, 2020).

The fashion industry in the United States was estimated to generate more than \$100 billion in 2021 (Orendorff, 2021), with most employed in the field receiving education at the university level. Students with interest in fashion may follow influencers like Billie Eilish (Burns, 2019), BryanBoy, or Amy Song (Larocca, 2018) and can tap into the market at an early age. Students who rely only on social media to obtain background knowledge about an area of interest, such as fashion, risk missing crucial foundational information.

Millennials in the fashion industry were motivated by an entrepreneurial ideal, pathway, practice, and experience (Brydges & Hrac, 2019). Gender, age, and class also influenced the participants' creations shared through social media. Nevertheless, many created their designs and display spaces as they worked. They independently negotiated the challenges of learning content, design elements, and business practices. Their paths might have been more accessible if they had opportunities to develop background knowledge before engaging in their enterprises.

There is little debate about the importance of background knowledge in student learning (Neuman et al., 2014). The amount known about a topic enhances the retention of information. Additionally, learners broaden their vocabulary, make more robust inferences, play with language, and better understand informational text when they deepen their background knowledge. Teachers can build background knowledge by teaching content-focused vocabulary, using comparison/contrast and analogies, providing reading experiences in content-based books, and embedding digital media in lessons.

Lupo et al. (2019) recommend using text sets to increase student background knowledge in elementary and secondary classrooms. A text set is a group of texts selected about a specified topic. There are several considerations when selecting text sets for a content-focused study. The texts should increase content knowledge, motivate students to read, and provide for a range of students' reading levels. Text sets can be used in multiple content areas to help students learn different perspectives and new content. Content from various disciplines can be integrated and students learn through authentic reading experiences. The authors caution that the selection of texts can be overwhelming but collaborating with colleagues can lighten the load of which texts to include.

The purpose of this article is to present ways in which children's literature can support the building of background knowledge about the fashion industry, using a text set appropriate for middle and high school students. This text set consists of biography, how-to, and reference books. Each genre presented includes reviews of the texts followed by a suggested strategy. Examples of products are included. Middle and high school teachers teaching art or career and technical education courses can use this text set and suggested strategies to develop the background knowledge necessary for understanding the fashion industry further.

Studying Fashion through Biography

Analyzing Characteristics of Fashion Trendsetters

Polka Dot Parade: A Book About Bill Cunningham (Blumenthal, 2018) describes Cunningham's search for residents who expressed their sense of everyday style. He snapped pictures of those who inspired, marveled, and delighted him through their clothing expressions, which he displayed on the pages of the *New York Times*. He captured those who "made" fashion instead of those who "followed" fashion. He lived a sparse life, developing his photographs at one-hour photo shops and filing his art in cabinets in his small New York apartment. He was honored for his work by the French government and through extravagant displays on New York's Fifth Avenue. He photographed his street-fashion inspirations until he died in 2016. His documentation of fashion continues to inspire the runway today.

Fancy Party Gowns (Blumenthal, 2017) is the story of Ann Cole Lowe, a well-known yet unknown gown designer. Born in Alabama, Lowe was the daughter of a dressmaker who took over her mother's business. The clientele included the upper echelon of Alabama society. From there, Lowe moved to Florida and New York to apprentice and attend design school. Typical of the times, Lowe received a segregated education, but she continued designing and dressmaking. One of her most famous dresses was Jacqueline Kennedy's wedding dress. Numerous Americans can identify her iconic creations, yet they do not know the designer's name.

Corey (2009) recounts Annette Kellerman's influence on swimsuit design in *Mermaid Queen*. As a child, Annette Kellerman could not walk well and took up swimming to become stronger. Although she became a champion racer, the public did not support a woman swimmer.

Kellerman then created water ballet, improvising a swimsuit to cover her bare legs. Annette was arrested for indecency when wearing her suit in Boston. The court judge agreed with her argument about nonsensical women's swimsuits. Bostonian women soon traded their bathing attire for Annette's one-piece, bare-legged, sleeveless racing suit style. Her ideas continue to influence contemporary swimwear.

Strategy Suggestion: Analyzing Characteristics through a Category Map

After reading the three biographies, students can analyze the lives of the fashion trendsetters through a Category Map as demonstrated in Figure 1 (Ciecierski & Bintz, 2017). The students work in pairs to expand their thinking and practice the skill of character analysis. They first list the titles across the top of the map. Then they choose characteristics they wish to highlight about the fashion trendsetters along the right side. To assist in choosing characteristics, the students can select from a substantial list (Josué, 2019). Students discuss how the trendsetters exhibited the identified characteristics and record them on the chart. Ciecierski and Binz (2017) recommend that students cite evidence of the answer locations.

Figure 1: Category Map

<i>Polka Dot Parade: A Book About Bill Cunningham</i>	<i>Fancy Party Gowns: The Story of Fashion Designer Ann Cole Lowe</i>	<i>Mermaid Queen</i>		
Bill Cunningham showed his passion by taking photos of those he found interesting wearing their everyday fashions.	Ann Cole Lowe showed her passion by taking over the dressmaking from her mother and creating fashions for many in high society.	Annette Kellerman showed her passion through her swimming. She took swimming to a new level when she created a new art form of water ballet.	Passionate	C H A R A C T E R I S T I C S
By photographing people on the street in their everyday fashion choices, Bill influenced others to wear what he saw in everyday attire.	Although many do not know her name, Ann dressed many famous people. Jacqueline Kennedy was one of her clients. By showcasing Ann's designs, Kennedy assisted Ann's influence.	Annette was influential because she redesigned swimsuits to be more practical and comfortable. Her revolutionary idea changed swimwear for women.	Influential	
Bill was committed to fashion by the number of photographs he kept. He filed them in his apartment and referred to them in his other works.	Ann showed her commitment because she faced many challenges. She had to rise above poverty and attend a segregated school. Despite the challenges, she persevered.	Annette was committed to the change in swimsuit design to make it more practical for her racing and water ballet. She had to convince others of the practicality. Her drive to do so showed her commitment.	Committed	
Bill used the imagination of the subjects of his photographs to spur his imagination. He used his archived photos to assist him in his fashion displays.	Ann's imagination helped her create different party gowns for each client. Since many of her clients attended the same events, Ann had to create a new gown for each client.	Annette's revolutionary idea of a sleek swimsuit was imaginative in its necessity. Because she was swimming long distances and performing in the water, her swimsuit needed to be lighter and moveable in the water.	Imaginative	

Comparing and Contrasting Similar Biographies

Told in first person, Elsa spoke of her drab childhood in *Bloom: A Story of Fashion Designer Elsa Schiaparelli* (Maclear, 2018). Inspired by the world around her, Elsa used her imagination to dream, thus giving her the confidence to leave home. She traveled through Paris, London, New York, and back to Paris, ready to show the fashion world her designs. Her sweater design with the illusion of a bow tie propelled her into the Paris fashion scene. Her avant-garde thinking led her to create “shocking pink,” a color she used in her designs that spun the fashion world’s head.

In *Hot Pink: The Life and Fashions of Elsa Schiaparelli*, Rubin (2015) details the life and Schiaparelli. As a teen, Schaip, a nickname, moved to London, then to Paris, beginning her foray into fashion. Following Paul Poiret’s advice, Schaip made clothes women wanted to wear after WWI. She used events and movements, such as the rise of aviators, vacationing in the tropics, and the Surrealist art movement, to inspire her designs. Her business thrived through the Great Depression as she worked with manufacturers to provide affordable clothing. After WWII, Schaip’s designs fell out of favor, but she persevered, presenting new styles of hats, luggage, and Hollywood costume designs. Her imaginary thinking propelled fashion to new heights and inspired future designers.

Strategy Suggestion: Comparison/Contrast with an Adapted T-Chart

A T-chart is a graphic organizer in which two features are compared side-by-side. The T-chart is highly adaptable, and examples are available online. To create an adapted T-chart, a rectangle is drawn at the top of the paper and labeled “Similarities.” The “T” is drawn below the rectangle with the titles of the books written on each side. The adapted T-chart leaves students more space to write the similarities and differences than a Venn diagram. Following Ciecierski and Binz’s (2017) recommendation, the students work in pairs and cite evidence as they complete the chart as seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Adapted T-Chart

Similarities	
How are	
<i>Bloom: A Story of Fashion Designer Elsa Schiaparelli</i> and	<i>Hot Pink: The Life and Fashions of Elsa Schiaparelli</i>
alike?	
Both books highlight the life of designer Elsa Schiaparelli.	
Both share her struggles in her younger years and how she worked to overcome them.	
Both books share her design of the bowknot sweater and its influence today.	
Both books share her use of color in fashion design, mainly “hot pink.”	

Differences

How are

Bloom: A Story of Fashion Designer Elsa Schiaparelli and
Hot Pink: The Life and Fashions of Elsa Schiaparelli
different?

Bloom: A Story of Fashion Designer Elsa Schiaparelli

Hot Pink: The Life and Fashions of Elsa Schiaparelli

Illustrated pictures

Use of photographs

More of a traditionally formatted children's book

Extended, oversized picture book format

More of a glossed-over timeline of Elsa's life

Much more detailed timeline, including her life as a single working mother

Mention of some of her mentors

Detail of mention of her mentors and how they influenced her

Story ends with touting of Elsa's influence on fashion then and now

End of the story, details Elsa's struggles to remain relevant in the fashion industry after designs fell out of favor

Analyzing Illustrations between Biographies

Different Like Coco (Matthews, 2007) describes Chanel's chronology from humble beginnings to her impact on fashion. Chanel's ability to study people yet design clothing she wanted to wear created a market for her designs. Her revolutionary, sleek, modern style made her clients want to be like Coco, not just dress like her. The illustrator's use of turned-up noses in the facial features subtly displays Chanel's view of the snobbery around her. The book concludes with a timeline of Chanel's life, including the creation of *Chanel No.5*, the first perfume conceived by a fashion designer, and the release of her concept of "the little black dress."

In *Coco and the Little Black Dress*, Van Haeringen (2015) describes Chanel's difficult upbringing in a French orphanage. While there, Coco became accomplished at sewing, knitting, crocheting, and embroidery, parlaying those skills into work as a seamstress. She spent her evenings with friends and soon realized that being wealthy was her heart's desire. She taught herself to ride to fit in with the elite crowd while wearing a pair of jodhpurs she designed. Coco then opened a millinery, creating not only hats and accessories but dresses that were practical, slimming, and did not require a corset. Her shop flourished, selling the concept of "the little black dress," a fashion staple every woman could wear while feeling beautiful.

Strategy Suggestion: Analyzing Illustrations with Access Lenses

Bryan (2019) introduces the reader to analyzing illustrations with "Access Lenses." The use of the chart guides discussion about illustrated mood. Mood is examined through facial expressions, body language, color, distance, aloneness, sounds, words, silence, big and little things, zooming in and out, and symbols and metaphors. When comparing two books on a similar topic, students can discuss how each illustrator portrayed the facets of mood. Similar incidences portrayed in each book may spur deeper conversation about how different illustrators chose to portray the same event. Students can keep track of their discussions within their reading notebooks (Rief, 2014) or display their ideas on wall charts. They should cite the pages of differing aspects of mood. The "Access Lenses" chart is available at fourclockfaculty.com/2015/05/visuals-access-lenses.

Studying Fashion with How-To Books

Summarizing Knowledge with Stories and Words

In Bolte's (2014) book *Girly Girl Style: Fun Fashion You Can Sketch*, tips for drawing fashion sketches are presented. The first section offers beginning step-by-step directions with an introduction about the style. Each sketch shows ideas on blending colors and sketching in pencil. The subsequent pages provide the budding designer with a four-step drawing process. Suggestions for sketching specific features or styles of clothing, Sketch designs for edges, beachwear, cold-weather wear, and vintage clothing are suggested. The book concludes with ideas for adding accessories to the designs.

The collaboration between author Ware (2018) and illustrator Papier is dynamic in *How to be a Fashion Designer*. Ware introduces the world of fashion to the reader, while Papier's vibrant collages include photographs and sketches with illustrated models from diverse backgrounds. Entries introduce the background content needed to be a fashion designer, including using tools, creating a mood board, selecting color, and finding inspiration for design within the environment. A "do-it-yourself" page where the budding designer is encouraged to practice follows the information. Suggestions for accessories to complete the inspired looks are also included. The last section of the book includes space for the designer to sketch. Back matter includes a glossary of fashion vocabulary and an index.

The premise of *The Fashion Book: Create Your Own Cool Looks from the Story of Style* (Beeden, 2014) is to show the novice designer how contemporary style is influenced by past designs. The designer is shown how to style themselves and others using information from ancient, medieval, and Victorian eras and fashion icons. The collage illustrations are enhanced with photographs, paintings, and sketches and supported with informational text and quotes about the fashion displayed. The illustrator shows how to assemble a complete style look within each section. Career opportunities in fashion, including student designers, shoe designers, make-up artists, and runway models, are highlighted. The back matter includes a detailed glossary, a list of influential designers, and an index.

Strategy Suggestion: Story or Vision Board

A story or vision board is a frequently used tool in design. Students are encouraged to "show what they know" by creating a vision board after the design concepts are taught and practiced. Tebbets (2008) recommends the final storyboard display theme, fashion illustration, typography, color, composition, and artistry. The theme of the storyboard drives all the other components. The illustrations show design ideas based on research. The typography must reflect the period or event portrayed on the storyboard and selecting appropriate colors, both essential to the theme's message. Composition and artistry refer to the visual presentation of the board's content. Movement of the eye from the viewer's perspective and attention to minute details of the final product are critical to the presentation of ideas. Figure 3 is an example of a vision board displaying the essential components.

Figure 3: Example of Vision Board



Studying Fashion History

Why'd They Wear That? Fashion as the Mirror of History (Albee, 2015) is an iconic fashion history book like one used in many undergraduate costume design programs (Tortora & Marcketti, 2015). The Grade 5–12 reader can explore fashion from the ancient world to the 20th century. True to the quality of a book published by National Geographic, photographs, great works of art, paintings, and sketches enhance the text. Each chapter is themed and details that era's social, political, economic, art, and people movements. The book concludes with a message about the fashion industry's impact on the environment and what the reader can do to decrease consumption. The back matter includes a fashion history timeline, bibliography, index, and illustration credits.

The Complete Book of Fashion History: A Stylish Journey through History and the Ultimate Guide for Being Fashionable in Every Era (Sedláčková, 2017) contains 24 informational chapters from prehistoric to contemporary fashion. Each chapter is collaged in differing modern cartoon styles and enhanced by short paragraphs, captions, and bubble quotes. The content contains biographies of influencers, types of attire, accessories, hairstyles, make-up, and production of the period's fashion. The book concludes with illustrations of fashion worldwide, fashion icons, swimwear, wedding dresses, accessories, shoes, and notable designers.

Strategy Suggestion: The Fashion Zine

Students can practice their skills of writing, revising, editing, and illustrating fashion design from history by creating a fashion zine. A zine is a handmade, reproducible, adaptable, and inexpensive way to create a magazine (Horst, 2015; Vanneman, 2010). For instance, students could study the clothing worn by people of an era. Figures 4 and 5 are examples of pages of a fashion zine entitled *The Lords and Ladies of Fashion-1776* created by a fifth-grade student as part of a unit of study on the American Revolution. The zine showcases six fashion designs, three for women and three for men, of differing social classes and positions in the war. A description accompanies each design. Fashion vocabulary such as “weskit,” “breeches,” “bodice,” and “petticoat” is used to describe the fabrics and ensemble. Students should include a table of contents and reference page when creating an informational zine.

Figure 4: A Sample Page from *Lords and Ladies of Fashion-1776*

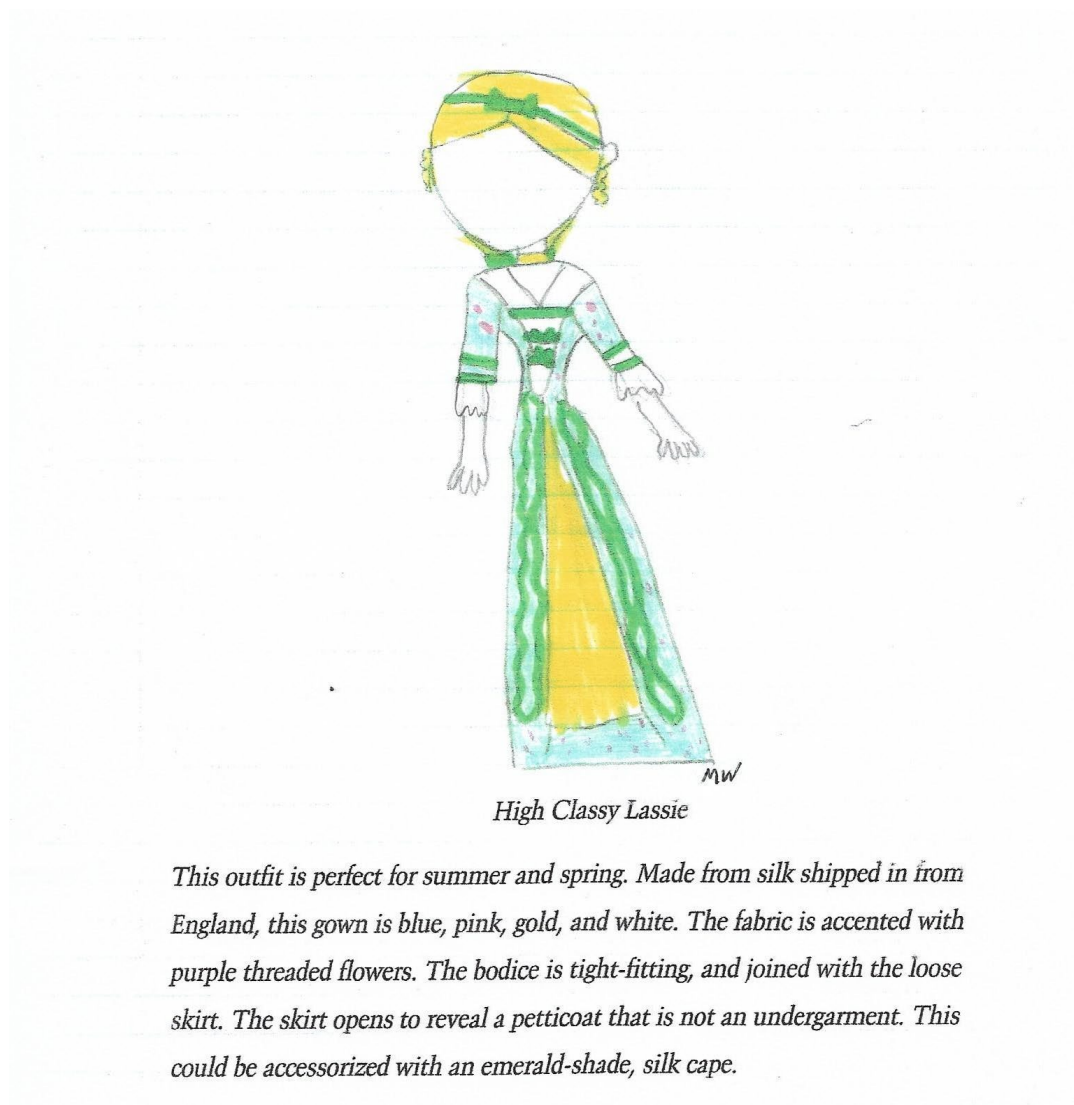
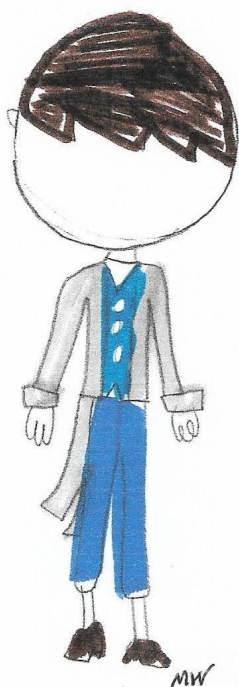


Figure 5: A Sample Page from Lords and Ladies of Fashion-1776



Rebel Lad

You'll be patriotic in this silver, tailed coat with a navy blue weskit. The coat sleeves are cuffed and the coat is fitted. The weskit is made of linen and the coat is made of silk.

The socks are hand-knitted, and the shoes are common made out of leather.

Conclusion

Text sets and literacy strategies can be used in instruction to build background knowledge in content-focused instruction (Neuman, 2014; Lupo, 2019). The presentation of this text set and accompanying strategies highlighted how they could be used in a study of the fashion industry, most likely in art or career and technical education courses. The strategies presented here can be adapted to other middle and high school content areas (Lupo et al., 2018). Biography is frequently used in English/Language Arts, social studies, and science courses. Teachers in these content areas also teach students the process of comparison/contrast. Therefore, the comparison/contrast strategies shared here can support student understanding of this comprehension process. Students across content area courses can also create a vision board or zine to present what they have learned. This format allows students a “flexible, open-ended, and welcome alternative to the usual paper and/or slide show presentation” (Gresham, 2018, p. 34).

Students returning to the classrooms after an extended time of online learning will likely be more adept at delving deeper into the digital and social media world. Some of these students may have spent time creating social media accounts related to fashion. However, many secondary students need to learn how to find and evaluate resources available at the click of a button (Gleason & von Gillern, 2018). Providing middle and high school students with the background knowledge

necessary to gain a deeper understanding of fashion can help them make better-informed decisions. Using children's literature in teaching can expand the knowledge of the fashion industry by introducing influencers, techniques, and history to secondary students. Students' analysis of this multibillion-dollar industry can support their aspirations to become designers, stylists, and social media influencers.

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Reading-Aloud to Children: A Cautionary Tale with Recommendations for Success

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ABSTRACT

This article advocates and promotes the practice of reading aloud to children, adults, and everybody in between, by parents, siblings, teachers, librarians, and guardians throughout the world. At the same time, it article presents a cautionary tale about reading aloud. The tale is based on an instance of one guest reader who read aloud a picturebook to children at a public reading session sponsored by Scholastic. Author experiences with and personal reflections on this session describes several cautions to adults (teachers, administrators, parents, grandparents, and guardians) that reading aloud to children is not a simple activity, but a complex art. A brief review of research on reading aloud is presented, highlighting four major categories: reading aloud picturebooks, reading aloud picturebooks across the curriculum, reading aloud picturebooks to older readers, and reading aloud to English Language Learners. A variety of recommended texts and instructional strategies for reading aloud to children are presented and some final thoughts described.

KEYWORDS

reading aloud;
picturebooks;
cautionary tale;
read-aloud texts;
read-aloud
strategies

What Is It That You Like To Do

What is it that you like to do
With someone you care about
In a comfortable place
With a lot of expression
And with no interruptions?
READ ALOUD! (of course)

(Layne, 2001, p. 53)

This little poem poignantly captures the big idea about reading aloud. It is a pleasurable experience because someone reads aloud to someone else who they care about. For parents, it is their children and for teachers it is their students. Moreover, reading aloud is a memorable experience, often lasting throughout a lifetime. One parent, who also is an elementary school teacher, stated:

I read aloud to my students as often as I can. They absolutely love it. They particularly like it when I perform while reading a book, changing my facial expression and fluctuating the tone of my voice. As for myself, I really enjoy reading aloud to individual students. It always reminds me of when I read to my son when he was a young child.

This article promotes the practice of reading aloud to children, adults, and everybody in between. It is a universal experience practiced by parents, siblings, teachers, librarians, and guardians throughout the world. At the same time, this article provides a cautionary tale about reading aloud. The tale cautions adults (i.e., teachers, administrators, parents, grandparents, and guardians) that reading aloud to children is not a simple activity, but a complex art.

I begin by sharing a vignette about an instance of reading aloud to children. Next, I share reflections on this instance of reading aloud from a reading educator point of view. Then, I describe research on reading aloud, highlighting four major categories: reading aloud picturebooks, reading aloud picturebooks across the curriculum, reading aloud picturebooks to older readers, and reading aloud to English Language Learners. Finally, I share a variety of recommended texts and instructional strategies for reading aloud to children. I end with some final thoughts.

Vignette

Readin' Worries

I got some readin' worries and
They're buggin' me to beat the band
The stuff they're tellin' me in school
Is makin' me look like a fool!

Those diagraphs are plumb hard to take
And *schwa* gives me a belly ache!
I'm sick to death of blends and such
And *no more vowels* - I've had too much!

The words I'm s'posed to know on sight
Are keepin' me up late at night!
And darn that word wall makes me frown
I'd like to say, "Let's tear it down!"

But teacher, she likes words a bunch
She reads to us right after lunch
And when she does, I start to feel
That books just might have some appeal.

"Cause all us kid's ill gather 'round
A-sitting, lyin' on the ground
As teacher reads aloud each day
My readin' worries melt away.

(Layne, 2001, pp. 54–55)

Reading aloud to my granddaughter takes away, or at least temporarily pauses, my worries. That's why I recently took my four-year old granddaughter to a read-aloud session for young children sponsored by Scholastic Publication. The session took place in a library/media center at

a large, local university. A total of nine children attended, each accompanied by at least one parent, grandparent, or caregiver. The read aloud was conducted by an adult affiliated with this university.

For this session, the library/media center was organized as a Book Fair. A variety of literature, mostly children's picturebooks, were displayed on tables so that children and adults could browse and purchase. As the session started, the guest reader sat in a large, soft, cozy chair, accompanied by her nine-year old daughter, and the children sat in a semi-circle in front of them. She introduced herself and her daughter and displayed the front cover of the picturebook she selected to read that morning. It was *The Good Egg* (John, 2019). The following is a precis.

This story uses a good egg as both an idiom and a description of the main character. It tells the story of not just a good egg, but a verrrrrry good egg, one is kind to, generous with, and thoughtful of other eggs. He is perfect to everyone, and that is the challenge. The good egg lives in a recycled carton with 11 other eggs, all of whom, except for the good egg, get into mischief and trouble. His carton-mates behave rotten and are just plain rotten. Metaphorically, the good egg starts to crack from the pressure of feeling like he, unlike the other eggs, must be perfect. He decides it's time for a change. The good egg makes time for himself, goes on a road trip, and learns the value of caring for self is as important as caring for others (even if they are rotten!).

The guest reader started to read-aloud the picturebook. Not long after, she invited her daughter to read the rest of the story aloud to the children.

As a grandfather, I was grateful that the guest reader and her daughter took the time on a weekend to read aloud to a group of children. To be sure, it was an enjoyable experience for the children, as well as for the parents and grandparents. In addition to grandfather, however, I am also a teacher educator in literacy education, specializing in reading education. As such, I spent time afterward the session reflecting on the whole experience, not as a grandfather but as a reading educator.

Reflection

There's Something

There's something in their eyes
There's something in their hearts
There's something in their souls
That longs to hear a story.

There's something in their eyes
That sparkles like a gem;
Each time I tell them of a book
I'd like to read to them.

There's something in their hearts,
A yearning deep within;
They're hoping I will take them,
To a place they've never been.

There's something in their souls,
Which craves the chance to meet;
The characters who seem to somehow,
Make their lives complete.

There's something in their eyes
There's something in their hearts
There's something in their souls
That longs to hear a story.

(Layne, 2001, pp. 60–61)

This poem is an important reminder that there is just something special about reading aloud to children. It is a joyful experience for children and the joy is reflected in their eyes, hearts, and souls. Mem Fox, an internationally renowned children's book author and advocate for reading aloud to children, characterizes the practice as “magic” (Fox, 2022, p. 2). Reading aloud to children comes natural to most adults, but tips are always helpful. Table 1 illustrates some general tips for reading aloud (Trelease & Giorgia, 2019).

Table 1: Suggested Tips for Reading Aloud

Tip 1	Preview the book by reading it to yourself ahead of time. Such an advance reading allows you to spot material you may want to shorten, eliminate, or elaborate on.
Tip 2	Remember that reading aloud comes naturally to very few people. To do it successfully and with ease, you must practice.
Tip 3	If you are reading a picturebook, make sure the children can see the pictures easily.
Tip 4	Allow listeners a few minutes to settle down and adjust their feed and minds to the story.
Tip 5	Set the stage for reading. Read the title, show the illustration, introduce the author and illustrator. Discuss briefly.
Tip 6	Remember that the art of listening is an acquired one. It must be taught and cultivated gradually—it just doesn't happen overnight.
Tip 7	Vary the length and subject matter of your readings.
Tip 8	Position yourself so that you and the reader are comfortable. Your head should be above the heads of your listeners for your voice to carry to the far side of the room.
Tip 9	Use plenty of expression when reading. If possible, change your tone of voice to fit the dialogue.
Tip 10	Adjust your pace to fit the story. During a suspenseful part, slow down, draw your words out, bring your listeners to the edge of their chairs.

Tip 11	When possible, encourage the listeners to join in on repetitive parts of the story.
Tip 12	Allow time for discussion after a reading a story. Do not turn discussions into quizzes or insist upon prying story interpretations from readers.
Tip 13	Do not read too fast. Read slowly enough for readers to build mental pictures of what they just hear you read. Slow down enough for listeners to see the pictures without feeling rushed.
Tip 14	Try to read a story that you personally enjoy. Your dislike may show in the reading.
Tip 15	Don't be unnerved by questions during the reading. Foster curiosity with patient answers, then resume the reading.
Tip 16	Relax and have fun!

Although it comes naturally, reading aloud is often viewed not as magic but as a simple activity in which an adult (i.e., teacher, parent, grandparent, or caregiver) reads aloud a picturebook to a child. While appearing simple, reading aloud is actually a complex art, requiring attention to at least two interrelated perspectives: curricular and instructional.

Curricular. This perspective focuses on text selection, and asks: What text is to be selected for reading aloud? Many parents and teachers use a variety of texts to read aloud in the classroom, but tips for text selection are always helpful. Table 2 illustrates some suggestions for selecting texts to read aloud.

Table 2: Suggestions for Selecting Texts to Read Aloud

Suggestion 1	Select a short text or excerpt from a book that provides several natural stopping points for the teacher to pause during a read-aloud, share her thinking about the strategy, and explain how the strategy helps her better understand the text.
Suggestion 2	Select an interesting, perhaps provocative text in which children are likely to be engaged in the topic because it is relevant, compelling, or intriguing.
Suggestion 3	Select a text that is more challenging than one that all the children would be able to read independently.
Suggestion 4	Select a familiar, well-loved text for a particular group of children.
Suggestion 5	Select a short text from a student's own writing that is conducive to thinking aloud about a particular strategy.

In this instance, although well-intended, I question *The Good Egg* as a good text selection for reading aloud to this particular group of children. In addition to the criteria identified above, I question it for at least three reasons: audience, theme, and tone. One, all children in this group were at, or under, the age of four years old. During the reading, they all sat quietly and listened passively, moving only to tilt their heads periodically to get a better view of the illustrations. They were not actively engaged. Two, the major theme of the picturebook is how the good egg had difficulty dealing with being perfect, exacerbated by the fact that his carton-mates were just the

opposite. While important, the children were not understanding this theme, even though the guest reader referred to it often. In fact, near the middle of the story, I heard one child whisper to another child: “This story is silly because eggs don’t talk.” Three, instead of being enjoyable and conversational, the tone of the picturebook is didactic, almost moralizing. It stresses the importance of behaving like the good egg and not like the mischievous eggs. I question whether any of the children created this meaning, or any other like it, from this text.

Instructional. This perspective focuses on how to read aloud a selected text. In this instance, at the beginning, the guest reader displayed the front cover of the book and then started to read aloud. Disappointingly and somewhat surprisingly, the reader provided no engaging introduction to the read-aloud experience. For example, there was no build-up to the experience, no attempt to generate curiosity, no invitation to children to ponder the front cover and make inferences and predictions about the story, no attempt to connect the book to children’s personal experiences, and invitation to children to wonder about what the title, characters, or story. The reader read the first two or three pages, and then invited her daughter to read aloud the rest of the story nonstop. Periodically, the adult reader paused the reading to share her ongoing understandings of the text. Children were not invited to share or discuss what they were understanding about the story at any time in the whole experience.

What was particularly noticeable, however, was that the daughter did not seem prepared to read aloud the book. From the time she started to read, it was apparent that she had not rehearsed reading-aloud the picturebook before her mother invited her to be a co-reader. For example, at one point in the story the good egg returns to see his carton-mate and greets each of them by their first name, e.g. “Hey, Greg.” However, when the daughter needed to read “Aloha, Shelly”, she struggled to read the word aloha. She tried to decode the word several different ways but wasn’t sure which, if any, pronunciation was correct. Finally, a parent in the group pronounced the word. The daughter smiled and continued to read.

In the end and upon reflection, I had mixed views on the whole experience. On the one hand, I view this experience as a generous and gracious instance of a guest reader and her daughter reading aloud to other people’s children. On the other hand, I see this experience as a cautionary tale, a caution for teachers to see reading aloud as a complex art, not a simple activity. What makes reading aloud a complex art is that the practice requires the integration of curriculum (Who am I reading aloud to? What texts are most appropriate for this person or group? How do I select a specific text to read? Why is this particular text appropriate to read aloud to this person or group?) and instruction (What are different ways to read aloud a text? What way should I read aloud this specific text to this person or group?). This integration and these questions illustrate the complex art of reading aloud. The following sections describe some of this complexity.

Reading Aloud

Reading aloud to children of any age improves their literacy.

(Fox, 2013, p. 5)

Historically, reading aloud has been, and continues to be, a common practice in schools, libraries, and homes all around the world. The benefits of reading aloud are universally recognized. Among other things, reading aloud supports language and language development, introduces children to a wide range of authentic literature, particularly picturebooks, demonstrates what good reading looks

like and sounds like, creates and supports meaningful relationships, and develops positive dispositions about reading (Fox, 2013, 2022). Simply put, reading aloud is a good way for teachers and students to spend time in school and for parents and children to spend time at home.

Here, I share a brief literature review of reading aloud across four categories: reading aloud picturebooks, reading aloud picturebooks across the curriculum, reading aloud picturebooks to older readers, and reading aloud to English Language Learners (ELLs).

Reading Aloud Picturebooks. Picturebooks are particularly beneficial for reading aloud. They provide opportunities to increase student engagement in reading and foster a positive disposition about reading. Moreover, picturebooks have much power and potential for students of all ages and across all content areas. For example, “picturebooks serve to help middle grade students visualize concepts, become familiar with vocabulary, connect to content, and get excited about science” (Braun, 2010, p. 46).

Reading aloud informational picturebooks is also important (Hoyt, 2009, as cited in Oczkus, 2009). Among other things, it helps students learn important content area material across the curriculum. Laminack and Wadsworth (2006) use bridge as a metaphor for the role picturebooks can play across the curriculum:

Picturebooks have the very real potential for bringing together ideas, images, content, vocabulary, language and art in the minds of any learner. Picturebooks often do become a bridge to span the curriculum, connecting each subject and each topic into one interconnected entity. This makes it possible for both teaching and learning to travel freely in the territory of ideas and information. (p. 208)

Reading Aloud Picturebooks Across the Curriculum. Picturebooks can be used to introduce a new topic or generate interest in a concept across the curriculum. Science is a good example. Reading aloud informational picturebooks in science helps students better understand scientific ideas (Webster, 2009). It can also help students develop an interest in science that currently doesn’t exist, as well as ultimately help them read better. Reading aloud picturebook biographies of scientists can help students understand how scientists think, observe, infer, formulate and test hypotheses, and draw conclusions (Zarnowski & Turkel, 2012).

Mathematics is another good example. Reading aloud informational picturebooks in mathematics can “provide students with opportunities to explore ideas, discuss mathematical concepts, and make connections to their own lives” (Hintz & Smith, 2013, p. 104). Making personal connections in math class helps make mathematics accessible for students. Integrating literature and mathematics helps students make sense of their lives.

Social Studies is yet another good example. Columba et al. (2009) state, “Events in the past are told in stories; we learn about others in remote places through stories; and myths and legends from ancient civilizations are passed down as stories” (p. 21). Informational picturebooks are also ideal to integrate literacy and social studies. They can be used “to promote civic competence, the underlying reason for teaching social studies” (Libresco et al., 2011, p. 2). Lastly, reading aloud picturebooks across the content areas can also increase word knowledge, syntax knowledge and genre knowledge, and thus motivation to read (Allen, 2007), as well as support student conceptual understanding (Hoffman et al., 2015).

Reading Aloud with Older Readers. Compared to young readers, little research has been conducted on reading aloud with older readers. And yet, in *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, the Commission on Reading states: “[Reading aloud] is a practice that should continue throughout the grades” (Anderson et al., 1985, p. 51), including middle grades education. Despite this emphasis, little is known about the effectiveness of read aloud practices beyond elementary school (Albright and Ariail, 2005). This may be because students are exposed to read-alouds less frequently as they move from primary through intermediate grades (Duursma et al., 2008), and in middle and high school the practice of reading aloud has all but disappeared (Delo, 2008).

Interestingly, reading aloud is an instructional strategy teachers use to encourage literacy for students regardless of their age. In fact, it is one of the most preferred instructional strategies by middle grades teachers (Harvey & Goudvis, 2017). For middle grades students, reading aloud can have positive outcomes for motivation, interest, engagement, and learning (Follos, 2006. McCormick and McTigue (2011) state that “because students can often comprehend orally presented texts that are normally above their own reading level, teacher read-alouds allow middle school students to experience texts that may be otherwise inaccessible” (p. 46).

Similarly, for middle grades teachers, it allows them to model aspects of fluent reading, such as pronunciation, intonation, rhythm, and style, as well as make texts more accessible to students (Albright & Ariail, 2005). It also helps teachers enhance student vocabulary development, especially when teachers pause to go over difficult words and then have conversations with students using the new words after reading (Reutzel & Cooter, 2018).

Reading aloud benefits students at all grade levels including high school (Zehr, 2010). Jim Trelease (2013), author of the *The New Read-Aloud Handbook*, believes that continuing to read aloud to learners at any age is beneficial. Similarly, Routman (2018) notes that “reading aloud—in all grades—has long been viewed as a critical factor in producing successful readers as well as learners who are interested in reading” (p. 20). In particular, older students who are less fluent readers receive the greatest benefits from teachers reading aloud (Meloy et al., 2002). Trelease (2013) states that

the first reason to read aloud to older kids is to consider the fact that a child’s reading level doesn’t catch up to his listening level until about the eighth grade . . . You have to hear it before you can speak it, and you have to speak it before you can read it. Reading at this level “happens through the ear.” (pp. 1–2)

In addition to children and adolescents, Pitts states that even “college students read more and better books when they are read to” (as cited in Krashen, 2004, p. 78).

Reading Aloud to English Language Learners (ELLs). Reading aloud helps English Language Learners develop English fluency, word meanings, oral language and thinking skills (Hickman et al., 2004). Interactive read-alouds help ELL students’ language development; curiosity; vocabulary development, particularly incidental vocabulary acquisition (Hoyt, 2009); and learning and comprehension, especially making connections with and across texts (Giroir et al., 2015, p. 647). Moreover, reading aloud is beneficial with special needs students. The practice helps “build a sense of community in any class that experiences the same shared, secret joy of

listening to the same great pieces of literature, be they brief or much longer. The class bonds in such a way that it becomes more like a family than a class” (Fox, 2013, p. 6).

Selecting Texts to Read Aloud

Whether reading to children, adolescents, young adults, or English Language Learners, there are several important factors to consider when selecting text to read aloud. Among others, these include student interest, student enjoyment, cultural relevance, authentic language, evocative illustrations, exposure to traditional literature, as well as variations of that literature, ability to develop positive disposition about reading, potential to illustrate what good reading looks and sounds like, potential for active engagement and discussion, and an introduction to award-winning literature, authors, and illustrators.

Selecting a text to read aloud is a curricular decision and an instance of creating curriculum. All too often, this decision is made as much, if not more, by commercial reading programs than by classroom teachers. Some time ago, however, Burke (1995) reminded us that “the most important curricular decisions about learners should always be made by those closest to learners.” Teachers, not reading programs, are closest to learners. On average, teachers spend approximately 6 hours per day, 185 days per year, with students in the classroom. Therefore, teachers, not programs, are in the best position to select the most appropriate, meaningful, and relevant texts to read aloud to their students.

Text type is an important consideration in selecting text to read aloud. Patterned text is an important text type, especially for young children. Patterned texts are “purposefully crafted conversations that are organized in predictable patterns” (Grote-Garcia & Durham, 2013, p. 45). *Where is the Green Sheep?* (Fox, 2004) is an example of this text type. It is a delightful and engaging picturebook that presents different colored sheep engaged in different activities. There are red sheep and blue sheep, and scared sheep and brave sheep. But, where is the green sheep? This is the question that is repeated throughout the story. The mystery of the whereabouts of the green sheep is only revealed at the end of the story.

In addition to patterned texts, other types include predictable language text, familiar cultural patterns, familiar problem pattern, chronological pattern, circle pattern, rhyme/rhythm pattern, and antiphonal voices pattern. Table 3 (in the appendix) illustrates these text types for reading aloud, provides a description, example, and citation for each text type.

Selecting Instructional Strategies for Reading Aloud

Like selecting texts, selecting instructional strategies for reading aloud is also a strategic and artful process. It is an instructional decision and, like text selection this decision is best made by teachers not publishers of reading programs. Of course, teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to read aloud text to their students. Many teachers have their favorites, but always welcome other strategies.

Table 4 (in the appendix) illustrates a variety of instructional strategies for reading aloud a text. These include interactive reading aloud, shared reading, echo reading, choral reading (single voices, accumulating voices, cacophonous voices, cast of background voices, multiple voice poems), reading/thinking aloud, reverse reading/thinking aloud, and readers theatre. It also provides a description, example, and citation for each instructional strategy. While different, these

strategies share a common characteristic, namely, they promote active engagement and social interaction of readers.

Final Thoughts

Some time ago, Soren Kierkegaard, the famous Danish theologian and philosopher, stated, “Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards” (McCallum, 2019, p. 5). I have always found this statement powerful in my personal and professional life, although it has been easier for me to remember it as moving forward also means looking backwards. In this final section I look back again at the reading aloud experience described here as a cautionary tale, in order to move forward with some recommendations for success with reading aloud to children, adults, and everybody in between.

Looking back at the reading aloud experience, I am reminded of Carolyn Burke, a nationally recognized reading teacher and researcher, who once stated, “When teaching is easy student learning is often hard, and when teaching is hard student learning is often easy.” Reading aloud is not particularly difficult for teachers and other adults. More often than not, teachers have a receptive audience. Students enjoy teacher read alouds, especially young students who have little experience being read to. Older students enjoy them as well, but sometimes for unexpected reasons.

For instance, I was recently invited by a 9th grade science teacher to conduct a read aloud in her science class. At the time students were studying important concepts in earth and space science. I read aloud *Stay Curious! A Brief History of Stephen Hawking* (Krull, 2020) for four reasons. One, the class period was only 45-minutes. This piece of literature is a 32-page, beautifully illustrated picturebook that I could read and discuss with students within that time limit. Two, I decided to conduct an interactive read aloud, stopping at strategic parts of the text and inviting students to share their current thinking. Three, this picturebook is an engaging biography of the science superstar, describing his personal life struggling with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) as well as his professional life exploring mysteries of the universe. Four, this picturebook deals with important concepts in earth and space science and therefore was relevant to what students were studying at the time.

After reading aloud the entire picturebook, I invited students to share their impressions of the book. One student stated,

I’ve heard about Stephen Hawking from movies, television shows, and the internet. I knew he was a scientist and studied the universe, but I didn’t know he was interested in black holes. I don’t know anything about black holes, but after you read this book, I am interested in knowing more about them.

I was pleased to hear that comment, especially that the picturebook motivated the student to want to know more about black holes. Another student stated,

I really liked this story. I didn’t know much about Hawking’s personal life, especially the fact that he liked to go to parties. What struck me the most, however, was how you read that book. You really are a good reader, and I haven’t seen a good reader read since elementary school.

I paused for a moment after hearing this comment. It was unexpected, but also appreciated. His comment reminded me that students can, and often do, experience teacher read alouds very differently.

Afterwards, I reflected on the whole experience. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and, according to the teacher and students, so did they. Quite frankly, it felt easy. I was not surprised to find this read aloud an easy and comfortable experience. After all, I am experienced. Over the years, I have conducted hundreds and hundreds of read alouds in K–12 classrooms and in my own graduate courses. What made this, and many other read alouds easy was preparation. I spent much more time preparing for this read aloud than conducting it.

Specifically, I spent much time considering and making curriculum decisions based on the question, What text should I read? I considered the audience, in this instance, 9th grade students. I also considered the content area, science, and specific topics in science, earth and space science, as well as time constraints, 45-minutes. I also spent much time considering and making instructional decisions: How should I read aloud this text? I considered many different read aloud strategies and decided on an interactive read aloud I wanted to engage students with an engaging story. Lastly, I considered some form of informal assessment or feedback. I decided on an interactive read aloud so I could hear student responses during the reading experience and reflections after the experience.

In sum, I tried to develop and conduct a read aloud that made student learning easy and enjoyable. To make student learning easy, I had to make my teaching hard in terms of consideration, preparation, and integration of curricular, instructional, and assessment decisions. Once again, I was reminded that reading aloud is not a simple activity but a complex art.

I end with the following poem.

Read to Them

Read to them
Before the time is gone and stillness fills the room again
Read to them
What if it were meant to be that you were the one, the only one
Who could unlock the doors and share the magic with them?
What if others have been daunted by scheduling demands,
District objectives, or one hundred other obstacles?
Read to them
Be confident Charlotte has been able to teach them about friendship,
And Horton about self-worth;
Be sure the Skin Horse has been able to deliver his message.
Read to them
Let them meet Tigger, Homer Price, Aslan, and Corduroy;
Take them to Oz, Prydain, and Camazotz;
Show them a Truffula Tree.
Read to them
Laugh with them at Soup and Rob,
And cry with them when the Queen of Terabithia is forever lost;
Allow the Meeker Family to turn loyalty, injustice, and war

Into something much more than a vocabulary lesson.
 What if you are the one, the only one, with the chance to do it?
 What if this is the critical year for even one child?
 Read to them
 Before the time, before the chance, is gone.

(Layne, 2001, pp. 62–63)

For me, this poem is endearing and gentle, but also a direct reminder for adults to read to children for many reasons, but especially before the time is gone. This reminder is important, not just because children will become adolescents and less receptive to being read aloud to by parents and teachers, but because reading aloud is a joyful and pleasurable experience for the child, parent, sibling, grandparent, guardian, and teacher. It is a valuable way to spend time with a child in school, at home, in the library, or any context in which adults and children interact with each other. I am speaking from personal experience.

I have a five-year-old granddaughter who just started kindergarten this year. I have read to her since she was born and continue to do so today. Like this poem, she shows and reminds me how important it is for me to read to her. We both will select books for me to read to her. Among others, she selects books about popular characters like Elsa and Anna in the movie *Frozen*, Peppa Pig and all her friends, the Disney princesses, the *Three Little Pigs* (Marshall, 2000) and its variations, *Rapunzel* (Zelinsky, 1997), *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* (Numeroff, 2015) and its variations, *I Know an Old Lady who Swallowed a Pie* (Jackson, 1997) and its variations, Mother Goose rhymes (Crews, 2011), and *The Little Engine That Could* (Piper, 1992). In turn, I also select books but introduce her to the works of popular authors like David Shannon, Mem Fox, Pat Hutchins, Denise Fleming, Don and Audrey Wood, Lois Ehlert, and Remy Charlip. Together, and perhaps most importantly, reading aloud her selections and mine helps me and her to stay personally, socially, emotionally, and psychologically connected with each other.

I hope this article is a reminder to “read to them before the time, before the chance, is gone” (Layne, 2001, p. 63). I also hope that it starts new conversations about reading aloud as a complex art, a valuable way for parents and guardians to spend time with children at home and for teachers to spend time with students in the classroom. Let the conversations begin.

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Table 3: Text Types for Reading Aloud

Text Type	Description	Text	Reference
Patterned Text	Texts having recurring patterns to help readers build fluency and support comprehension.	<i>Where is the Green Sheep?</i> <i>It Didn't Frighten Me</i> <i>The Important Book</i> <i>Fortunately</i> <i>To Market, To Market</i> <i>Fortunately, Unfortunately</i> <i>Our Granny</i> <i>No David</i> <i>Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes</i> <i>Knock Knock Who's There?</i> <i>Uptown</i> <i>Hist</i> <i>Guess What?</i> <i>Who's Hiding Here</i>	Fox, M. (2004). <i>Where is the Green Sheep?</i> Clarion. Goss, J., & Harste, J. <i>It Didn't Frighten Me</i> . Willowisp Press. Brown, M.W. (1977). <i>The Important Book</i> . Harper Collins. Charlip, R (1993). <i>Fortunately</i> . Aladdin. Miranda, A. (2001). <i>To Market, To Market</i> . Clarion. Foreman, M. (2011). <i>Fortunately, Unfortunately</i> . Andersen Press. Wild, M. (1998). <i>Our Granny</i> . Clarion. Shannon, D. (1998). <i>No David</i> . Blue Sky Press. Fox, M. (2010). <i>Ten Little Fingers and Ten Little Toes</i> . Clarion. Grindley, S. (1986). <i>Knock Knock Who's There?</i> Knopf. Collier, B. (2004). <i>Uptown</i> . Square Fish. Dennis, C. (2012). <i>Hist</i> . Penguin Australia. Fox, M. (1995). <i>Guess What?</i> Clarion. Yoshi. (1987). <i>Who's Hiding Here</i> . Picture Book Studio.
Predictable Language Text	Texts having “repetitive language patterns or story patterns or familiar sequences such as numbers, the days of the week, or hierarchical patterns” (Huck, Hepler & Hickman, 1993)	<i>The Very Busy Spider</i> <i>If You Give a Mouse a Cookie</i> <i>Koala Lou, I Do Love You</i> <i>The Napping House</i> <i>Bark</i> <i>Something from Nothing</i> <i>Pout-Pout Fish</i> <i>Go Sleep in Your Own Bed</i> <i>We All Went On Safari</i> <i>William's Winter Nap</i> <i>One Day in the Eucalyptus, Eucalyptus Tree</i> <i>The Maestro Plays</i>	Carle, E. (1995). <i>The Very Busy Spider</i> . World of Eric Carle. Numeroff, L. (2015). <i>If You Give a Mouse a Cookie</i> . HarperCollins. Fox, M. (1994). <i>Koala Lou, I Do Love You</i> . The Trumpet Club. Wood, A. (2009). <i>The Napping House</i> . Clarion. Feiffer, J. (2018). <i>Bark</i> . Michael di Capua Books. Gilman, P. (2012). <i>Something from Nothing</i> . Scholastic Canada. Diesen, D. (2013). <i>Pout-Pout Fish</i> . Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Fleming, C. (2017). <i>Go Sleep in Your Own Bed</i> . Schwartz & Wade. Krebs, L. (2021). <i>We All Went On Safari</i> . Barefoot Books. Groenink, C. (2017). <i>William's Winter Nap</i> . Little Brown Books for Young Readers. Bernstrom, D. (2017). <i>One Day in the Eucalyptus, Eucalyptus Tree</i> . Martin, Jr., B. (1994). <i>The Maestro Plays Voyager</i> .

Familiar Cultural Pattern	Texts having common patterns in a culture	<i>A Bear Sat on My Porch Today</i>	Yolen, J. (2018). <i>A Bear Sat on My Porch Today</i> . Chronicle.
		<i>Q is for Duck</i>	Folsom & Elting (2005). <i>Q is for Duck</i> . HMH.
		<i>I Just Want to Say Good Night</i>	Isadora, R. (2017). <i>I Just Want to Say Good Night</i> . Nancy Paulsen Books.
		<i>Chicken Soup with Rice</i>	Sendak, M. (2018). <i>Chicken Soup with Rice</i> . HarperCollins.
		<i>Jo Macdonald Saw a Pond</i>	Quattlebaum (2013). <i>Jo Macdonald Saw a Pond</i> . Dawn Publications.
		<i>Does a Kangaroo Have a Mother, Too?</i>	Carle, E. (2005). <i>Does a Kangaroo Have a Mother, Too?</i> HarperCollins.
		<i>There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Shell</i>	Colandro, L. (2008). <i>There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Shell</i> . Scholastic.
Familiar Problem Pattern	Texts having patterns based on other patterned stories with similar problems.	<i>Once Upon a Time</i>	Prater, J. (1995). <i>Once Upon a Time</i> . Candlewick.
		<i>Where are My Shoes?</i>	Dudke, M.A., & Larsen, M. (1993). <i>Where are My Shoes?</i> Barney.
		<i>Three Little Pigs</i>	Weisner, D. (2001). <i>Three Little Pigs</i> . Clarion.
		<i>Somebody and the Three Blairs</i>	Tolhurst, M. (1990). <i>Somebody and the Three Blairs</i> . Orchard.
		<i>Five Little Monkeys Sitting in a Tree</i>	Christelow, E. (1991). <i>Five Little Monkeys Sitting in a Tree</i> . Scholastic.
		<i>Harriet, You'll Drive Me Wild!</i>	Fox, M. (2000). <i>Harriet, You'll Drive Me Wild!</i> Voyager.
		<i>The True Story of the Three Little Pigs</i>	Scieszka, (1996). <i>The True Story of the Three Little Pigs</i> . Puffin.
Chronological Pattern	Texts following a sequence of events	<i>The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig</i>	Trivizas (1997). <i>The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig</i> . Margaret K. McElderry Books.
		<i>The Three Javalenas</i>	Lowell, S. (1992). <i>The Three Javalenas</i> . Cooper Square Publishing.
		<i>Moose's Loose Tooth</i>	Clarke, J.A. (2003). <i>Moose's Loose Tooth</i> . Scholastic.
		<i>Three Billy Goats Gruff</i>	Barnett, M. (2022). <i>Three Billy Goats Gruff</i> . Orchard Books.
		<i>The Grouchy Ladybug</i>	Carle, E. (1999). <i>The Grouchy Ladybug</i> . Harper Festival.
		<i>One Monday Morning</i>	Shulevitz, U. (2003). <i>One Monday Morning</i> . Square Fish.
		<i>Grandpa's Slippers</i>	Watson, J. (1989). <i>Grandpa's Slippers</i> . Scholastic.
Chronological Pattern	Texts following a sequence of events	<i>Spunky Little Monkey</i>	Martin, Bill, Jr. (2017). <i>Spunky Little Monkey</i> . Scholastic.
		<i>Dreadful David</i>	Odgers, (1984). <i>Dreadful David</i> . Scholastic.
		<i>Seven Blind Mice</i>	Young, E. (1992). <i>Seven Blind Mice</i> . Puffin.
		<i>The Teeny-Tiny Woman</i>	Galdone, P. (1984). <i>The Teeny-Tiny Woman</i> . Clarion.

Circle Pattern	“Texts that are artistically and purposefully crafted so that the main character or characters experience a great adventure that terminates back at the original location”	<i>City Dog, Country Dog</i> <i>If You Give a Dog a Donut</i> <i>Nicolas, where have you been?</i> <i>I Love You More</i> <i>Meerkat Mail</i> <i>Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes</i>	Willems, M. (2010). <i>City Dog, Country Dog</i> . Hyperion. Numeroff, L. (2011). <i>If You Give a Dog a Donut</i> . HarperCollins. Lionni, L. (1987). <i>Nicolas, where have you been?</i> Alfred A. Knopf. Duksta, L. (2001). <i>I Love You More</i> . Shine. Gravett, E. (2006). <i>Meerkat Mail</i> . Macmillan. Dean, J. (2010). <i>Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes</i> . HarperCollins.
Rhyme/Rhythm Pattern	Texts having words that produce the same or similar sounds, and the reoccurrence of these sounds.	<i>Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See</i> <i>Walking Through the Jungle</i> <i>The Flea's Sneeze</i> <i>The Day the Goose Got Loose</i> <i>Baby Hearts and Baby Flowers</i> <i>Big Pigs</i> <i>Sleepytime Rhyme</i> <i>I Wish I Had a Pirate Suit</i> <i>Here Comes the Band!</i> <i>Mother, Mother, I Feel Sick: Send for the Doctor, Quick, Quick, Quick</i>	Martin, Jr., B. (1996). <i>Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See</i> . Henry Holt. Harter, D. (2001). <i>Walking Through the Jungle</i> . Mantra Lingua. Downey, L. (2000). <i>The Flea's Sneeze</i> . Scholastic. Lindbergh, R. (1990). <i>The Day the Goose Got Loose</i> . Scholastic. Charlip, R. (2002). <i>Baby Hearts and Baby Flowers</i> . Greenwillow. Helakoski, L. (2014). <i>Big Pigs</i> . Boyds Mill. Charlip, R. (2001). <i>Sleepytime Rhyme</i> . Greenwillow. Allen, P. (1989). <i>I Wish I Had a Pirate Suit</i> . Viking Kestral. Jorgensen, G. (1988). <i>Here Comes the Band!</i> Rigby. Charlip, R. (2001). <i>Mother, Mother, I Feel Sick: Send for the Doctor, Quick, Quick, Quick</i> . Tricycle Press.
Antiphonal Voices Pattern	Alternating reading by two or more readers in which one reader reads with a high voice vs. low voice, happy voice vs. sad voice, assertive vs. questioning voice, etc.	<i>That's Good, That's Bad</i> <i>Eat Your Peas</i> <i>Macca the Alpaca</i> <i>Tops & Bottoms</i> <i>I am a Tiger</i> <i>Hairy Bear</i> <i>Don't Say That Word</i> <i>Dear Mr. Blueberry</i> <i>Yo! Yes?</i> <i>The Ghost Eye Tree</i> <i>No, No, Kitten</i> <i>Duck! Rabbit!</i>	Cuyler, M. (1993). <i>That's Good, That's Bad</i> . Henry Holt. Gray, K. (2009). <i>Eat Your Peas</i> . Random House UK. Cosgrove, M. (2018). <i>Macca the Alpaca</i> . Scholastic. Stevens, J. (1995). <i>Tops & Bottoms</i> . Scholastic. Newson, K. (2019). <i>I am a Tiger</i> . Scholastic. Cowley, J. (1990). <i>Hairy Bear</i> . Wright Group. Katz, A. (2007). <i>Don't Say That Word</i> . Margaret K. McElderry Books. James, S. (1991). <i>Dear Mr. Blueberry</i> . Aladdin. Raschka, C. (2007). <i>Yo! Yes?</i> Scholastic. Martin Jr., B. (1985). <i>The Ghost Eye Tree</i> . Henry Holt. Thomas, S.M. (2015). <i>No, No, Kitten</i> . Boyds Mill. Rosenthal, (2009). <i>Duck! Rabbit!</i> Chronicle.

Table 4: Instructional Strategies for Reading Aloud

Text Type	Description	Text	Reference
Interactive Reading Aloud	Strategy for reading aloud a text, occasionally pausing for conversation at selected points in the text.	<i>The Wise Woman and Her Secret</i>	Merriam, E. (1991). <i>The Wise Woman and Her Secret</i> . Simon & Schuster.
		<i>What Joe Saw</i>	Hines, A.G. (1994). <i>What Joe Saw</i> . Greenwillow.
		<i>Owl Moon</i>	Yolen, J. (2001). <i>Owl Moon</i> . Philomel Books.
		<i>Into the Forest</i>	Browne, A. (2004). <i>Into the Forest</i> . Walker Books.
		<i>What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?</i>	Jenkins, S., & Page, R. (2009). <i>What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?</i> Houghton Mifflin.
		<i>A Nice Walk in the Jungle</i>	Bodsworth, N. (1990). <i>A Nice Walk in the Jungle</i> . Viking Kestrel.
Shared Reading	Strategy for reading aloud a text in which the teacher conducts most of the reading and students respond based on what they are understanding.	<i>You Read to Me, I'll Read to You</i>	Hoberman, M. (2006). <i>You Read to Me, I'll Read to You</i> Little Brown Books.
		<i>Very Short Fairy Tales to Read Together</i>	Hoberman, M. (2012). <i>Very Short Fairy Tales to Read Together</i> . Little Brown Books.
		<i>Very Short Fables to Read Together</i>	Hoberman, M. (2013). <i>Very Short Fables to Read Together</i> . Little Brown Books.
		<i>Very Short Mother Goose Tales to Read Together</i>	Hoberman, M. (2012). <i>Very Short Mother Goose Tales to Read Together</i> . Little Brown Books.
Echo Reading	Strategy for reading aloud a text line by line or sentence by sentence modeling appropriate fluency and prosody. After reading each line, student(s) echoes the reading of the line with the same rate, fluency, and prosody.	<i>Shh! We Have a Plan</i>	Haughton, C. (2014). <i>Shh! We Have a Plan</i> . Candlewick.
		<i>Tough Boris</i>	Fox, M. (1998). <i>Tough Boris</i> . HMH Books.
		<i>I Went Walking</i>	Williams, S. (1996). <i>I Went Walking</i> . Clarion.
		<i>Here Are My Hands</i>	Martin, Jr., B., & Archambault, J. (1985). <i>Here Are My Hands</i> . Henry Holt.
		<i>Quick as a Cricket</i>	Wood, A. (1982). <i>Quick as a Cricket</i> . Scholastic.
Choral Reading: Single Voices	Strategy for reading aloud a text or sections of a text in unison with whole class or group of students, helping build students' fluency, self-confidence, and motivation.	<i>What Does The Fox Say?</i>	Nyhus, S. (2013). <i>What Does The Fox Say?</i> Simon & Schuster.
		<i>The Spider in the Shower</i>	Mahy, M. (1988). <i>The Spider in the Shower</i> . Rigby.
		<i>Chicken Little</i> (retold)	Hillman, J. (1989). <i>Chicken Little</i> . Rigby.
		<i>Who Sank the Boat?</i>	Allen, P. (1982). <i>Who Sank the Boat?</i> Putnam.
		<i>Suddenly!</i>	McNaughton, C. (1994). <i>Suddenly!</i> Voyager.

		<i>Who's That Tripping Over My Bridge?</i>	Salley, C. (2002). <i>Who's That Tripping Over My Bridge?</i> Pelican.
Choral Reading: Accumulating Voices	Strategy for using choral reading with accumulating voices.	<i>Hattie and the Fox</i> <i>King Bidgood's in the Bathtub</i> <i>The House That Jack Built</i> <i>The Great Big Enormous Turnip</i> <i>Henry's Stars</i> <i>I Have to Go!</i> <i>Old Devil Wind</i> <i>The Napping House</i> <i>Today is Monday</i> <i>Where are You Going? To See My Friend!</i> <i>Henny-Penny</i>	Fox, M. (1986). <i>Hattie and the Fox</i> . Clarion. Wood, A. (1996). <i>King Bidgood's in the Bathtub</i> . Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Miller, J. P. (2008). <i>The House That Jack Built</i> . Little Golden Books. Award, A. (2013). <i>The Great Big Enormous Turnip</i> . Award Publications. Elliot, D. (2015). <i>Henry's Stars</i> . Philomel. Munsch, R. (1993). <i>I Have to Go!</i> Annick. Martin, Jr. B. (1971). <i>Old Devil Wind</i> . Voyager. Wood, A. (1984). <i>The Napping House</i> . Harcourt Brace. Carle, E. (1993). <i>Today is Monday</i> . Scholastic. Carle, E., & Iwamura, K. (2001). <i>Where are You Going? To See My Friend!</i> Scholastic. Wattenberg, J. (2000). <i>Henny-Penny</i> . Scholastic.
Choral Reading: Cacophonous Voices	Strategy for using choral reading with cacophonous voices.	<i>Grumbles from the Town: Mother-Goose Voices With a Twist</i> <i>Red: A Crayon's Story</i> <i>Strega Nona</i> <i>Some Smug Slug</i> <i>Mice Squeak, We Speak</i> <i>Noisy Nora</i> <i>Duck on a Bike</i> <i>Dooby Dooby Moo</i> <i>Betsy Red Hoodie</i> <i>The Day the Crayons Quit</i> <i>The Day the Crayons Came Home</i>	Yolen, J. (2016). <i>Grumbles from the Town: Mother-Goose Voices With a Twist</i> . Wordsong. Hall, M. (2015). <i>Red: A Crayon's Story</i> . Takatuka. De Paola, T. (1975). <i>Strega Nona</i> . Aladdin. Edwards, P.D. (1996). <i>Some Smug Slug</i> . HarperCollins. dePaola, T. (1997). <i>Mice Squeak, We Speak</i> . G.P. Putnams. Wells, R. (1997). <i>Noisy Nora</i> . Penguin. Shannon, D. (2002). <i>Duck on a Bike</i> . The Blue Sky Press. Cronin, D., & Lewin, B. 2006). <i>Dooby Dooby Moo</i> . Scholastic. Levine, G.C. (2010). <i>Betsy Red Hoodie</i> . HarperCollins. Daywalt, D. (2013). <i>The Day the Crayons Quit</i> . Philomel. Daywalt, D. (2015). <i>The Day the Crayons Came Home</i> . Philomel.

		<i>Superchicken</i> <i>Gotta Go! Gotta Go!</i> <i>Fix-It Duck</i> <i>Giggle, Giggle, Quack</i> <i>Quacky Quack-Quack!</i> <i>Crunch the Crocodile</i>	Jane, M. (2003). <i>Superchicken</i> . Scholastic. Swope, S. (2004). <i>Gotta Go! Gotta Go!</i> Sunburst. Alborough, J. (2001). <i>Fix-It Duck</i> . HarperCollins. Cronin, D. (2002). <i>Giggle, Giggle, Quack</i> . Simon & Schuster. Whybrow, I. (1991). <i>Quacky Quack-Quack!</i> Candlewick. Croser, J. (1986). <i>Crunch the Crocodile</i> . McClean-Carr.
Choral Reading: Cast of Voices	Strategy for using choral reading with a cast of different voices.	<i>Wolf Won't Bite</i> <i>What's That Noise?</i> <i>Elmer Takes Off</i> <i>Petunia</i> <i>Wake Up, Big Barn</i> <i>Happy Birthday Hamster</i> <i>Bear Snores On</i> <i>Rain!</i> <i>Cloudland</i> <i>Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type</i> <i>Skippyjon Jones</i> <i>Who Eats Orange</i>	Gravett, E. (2012). <i>Wolf Won't Bite</i> . Simon & Schuster. Rosenfeldt (1988). <i>What's That Noise?</i> Orchard Books. McKee, D. (1997). <i>Elmer Takes Off</i> . HarperCollins. Duvoisin, R. (1977). <i>Putunia</i> . Alfred A. Knopf. Chitwood, S.T. (2002). <i>Wake Up, Big Barn</i> . Scholastic. Lord, C. (2011). <i>Happy Birthday Hamster</i> . Scholastic. Wilson, (2002). <i>Bear Snores On</i> . Little Simon. Stojic, M. (2000). <i>Rain!</i> Random House. Burningham, J. (1996). <i>Cloudland</i> . Dragonfly. Cronin, B. (2000). <i>Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type</i> . Atheneum Books for Young Children. Schachner, J. (2003). <i>Skippyjon Jones</i> . Puffin. White (2018). <i>Who Eats Orange</i> . Beach Lane Books.
Choral Reading: Reading Aloud Multiple Voice Poems	Choral Reading: Reading Aloud Multiple Voice Poems	<i>Boom! Bellow! Bleat!: Animal Poems for Two or More</i> <i>Dirty Laundry Pile: Poems in Different Voices</i> <i>Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices</i> <i>I am Phoenix: Poems for Two Voices</i> <i>Big Talk: Poems for Four Voices</i>	Heard, G. (2019). <i>Boom! Bellow! Bleat!: Animal Poems for Two or More</i> . Wordsong. Janeczko (2001). <i>Dirty Laundry Pile: Poems in Different Voices</i> . HarperCollins. Fleischman, P. (2004). <i>Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices</i> . HarperCollins. Fleischman, P. (1989). <i>I am Phoenix: Poems for Two Voices</i> . HarperCollins. Fleischman, P. (2000). <i>Big Talk: Poems for Four Voices</i> . HarperCollins.

		"Me"	"Me." In Swados, E. (2002) <i>Hey You! C'mere: A Poetry Slam</i> . Arthur A. Levine.
		<i>Voices in the Park</i>	Browne, A. (2001). <i>Voices in the Park</i> . DK Children.
		<i>Math Talk</i>	Pappas, T. (1993). <i>Math Talk</i> . Wide World Publishing.
Readers Theatre	Reader's theater highlights reading fluency and involves students reading parts orally from scripts that include multiple characters and much dialogue.	<i>The Web Files</i>	Palantini, M. (2001). <i>The Web Files</i> . Scholastic.
		<i>Dinner at the Panda Palace</i>	Calmenson, S. (1995). <i>Dinner at the Panda Palace</i> . HarperCollins.
		<i>Yo, Hungry Wolf</i>	Lewin, B. (1993). <i>Yo, Hungry Wolf</i> . Dell.
		<i>The Shopping Basket</i>	Burningham, J. (1980). <i>The Shopping Basket</i> . Candlewick.
		<i>Alvie Eats Soup</i>	Collins, R. (2002). <i>Alvie Eats Soup</i> . Arthur A. Levine.
		<i>Woolbur</i>	Helakoski, L. (2008). <i>Woolbur</i> . HarperCollins.
		<i>The Obvious Elephant</i>	Robinson, B. (2000). <i>The Obvious Elephant</i> . Bloomsbury.
		<i>Time to Sleep</i>	Fleming, D. (1997). <i>Time to Sleep</i> . Henry Holt.

Beyond the Single Story: Utilizing Cluster Texts to Celebrate Diversity

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates the advantages of incorporating cluster texts in educational settings to present a variety of viewpoints. The discussion begins by examining the reasons behind choosing picturebooks, followed by introducing the concepts of intertextuality and cluster texts. The significance of students' ability to connect with the texts is highlighted. The article then introduces three carefully curated cluster text sets, developed with consideration for classroom observations and students' requirements: 1) laying the groundwork and the school experience; 2) highlighting unsung heroes and overcoming obstacles; 3) showcasing diverse family structures and experiences. Each set features an in-depth analysis of a primary text, accompanied by a table outlining supplementary books within the cluster. The article wraps up with a summary of key insights on the subject matter.

KEYWORDS

cluster texts;
intertextuality;
viewpoints;
diverse literature

Each student enters my classroom with preconceived notions about the year. For many, their emotions are derived from stories passed on from older siblings or friends. Some worry that their differences will not be accepted. Others worry the uniqueness of their home life will not be understood. Every year as I welcome students to our room, I see them evaluating the experience from the first step in the door. The first thing they do is look around the room. There is always a brief moment of pause . . . a pause with conversation . . . a pause with movement . . . they simply look for visual cues that are comforting (Jenny, the second author).

Children want to see a classroom in which they feel represented. Creating a classroom environment that visually reflects a variety of people and experiences allows for students to know they are accepted. When designing a classroom, we feel that diversity and inclusiveness in terms of the representation of race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, abilities and disabilities and so on are important. When entering this classroom, students may encounter diverse bulletin boards, classroom libraries, and visual cues increasing the potential for them to feel comfortable in their environment. This mindset transcends throughout all members of the classroom. Feeling welcomed and comfortable can allow children to lower their inhibitions, place their concentration on their learning, and feel safe while approaching new ideas (Eggebrecht-Weinschreider, 2020). It is a gateway to social, emotional, and academic success. We believe that much of this success occurs through stories.

Life is about stories. Storytelling can serve to develop community and honor diverse communities. There are stories in every subject we teach: language arts, social studies, and even math and science. In our classrooms, we value picturebooks that are diverse culturally and linguistically as one way to share stories. Through a picturebook, readers can feel the emotions of

the individuals represented, can travel during the time period to visualize, and can experience the event rather than just reading to learn a bunch of facts or to identify story elements. We believe and advocate for utilizing text sets in the classrooms. Text sets are one powerful tool that can be used to share stories with multiple perspectives (Cappiello & Dawes, 2021). With slight modifications, text sets can be transitioned into another powerful learning tool, cluster texts.

Cluster texts are like text sets in many ways (Ciecierski, 2017). They consist of multiple books just like a text set. However, in a cluster text one text is identified as the way-in text. A way-in text is a text that stimulates motivation where motivation did not exist before (Bintz, 2011). This is the text a teacher and his/her students would utilize first. Like text sets, cluster texts do not tell just a single story. They have sophisticated text potential in terms of the way the texts are connected as well as the vast array of stories they share. Because the diversities in our classroom grow each year, cluster texts provide a tool where students may think, “I see myself in these books, so I know I am not alone.”

The purpose of this article is to share the potentials of utilizing cluster texts in the classroom to share more than a single story. We begin by sharing our reasoning for choosing picturebooks. Additionally, we present an introduction for intertextuality and cluster texts. We continue by sharing the value of students seeing themselves in the texts around them. Next, we share three cluster texts formulated after reflecting on our classrooms and the needs of our students. We conclude with final thoughts.

The first author taught for fifteen years in an urban district with many of her years spent teaching middle school in urban schools. The second author also spent fifteen years in the classroom. Her experience is situated primarily in an elementary school located in a rural district. Even *our* stories and backgrounds are diverse in a variety of ways. Our experiences and backgrounds have helped us create cluster texts to represent multiple perspectives. Therefore, we share three cluster texts: 1) developing an understanding of inclusion and empathy; 2) celebrating the uncelebrated through overcoming challenges; 3) diverse family dynamics and experiences. We describe one text in detail for each cluster text set. This is the way-in text and is followed by a table showcasing the other books in the cluster. We conclude with final thoughts.

Picturebooks in the Classroom

Picturebooks are not just for children. As a matter of fact, picturebooks are even appropriate for adults (Paul, 2021), making them a strong resource to have in classrooms in elementary, middle, and high schools. Picturebooks are around 32 pages in length (Murphy, 2009). While they are not lengthy in the number of pages, they are often hefty in terms of benefits. With compact language and rich aesthetic displays, picturebooks have great potential to be highly sophisticated (Ciecierski & Bintz, 2015) and therefore, encourage complex thinking to deconstruct their meaning.

In many picturebooks, both the text and the pictures work together symbiotically to tell the story (Youngs & Serafini, 2011). The story would not exist without both the pictures and the text. Thus, we utilize the word picturebook as one word, because of the importance of the two to each other. Analyzing the techniques of the author and illustrator has potential to help readers learn skills that may be difficult and challenging (Leland et al., 2017). For example, recognizing the author’s purpose, making inferences, drawing conclusions, and identifying the main idea are often difficult for students to understand but with picturebooks, it might be easier for several reasons. First, the text is shorter, so the reader can really focus in on the skill or practice. Second, the reader can utilize both the text and the illustrations to support their thinking and learning.

Picturebooks are a helpful resource to build background knowledge and interest (Bintz, 2011; Ciecierski & Bintz, 2015; Murphy, 2009). Many times, a picturebook can be read as an anticipatory set or “hook” to lay a foundation for a topic being studied and to stimulate interest. Once the picturebook is read and deconstructed, then longer and more traditional texts can follow. Implementing this type of instruction is an example of teaching in an intertextual manner.

Intertextuality and Cluster Texts

Intertextuality is a reading stance that acknowledges that no reader reads in a vacuum. According to Bakhtin (1987), “All texts are tinted with echoes and reverberations of other texts” (p. 91). As a matter of fact, whether you know it or not, when you read any text, you are making connections to other texts as well as other experiences. According to Kristeva (1987), text can be viewed as a mosaic of quotations. They are absorbed and transformed from one another to amplify meaning. According to Ciecierski and Bintz (2018), “reading intertextually affords the potential to interpret texts from multiple perspectives. It gives teachers a tool to challenge students to stretch their thinking beyond the fallacy that there is always a right or wrong answer, a black or white solution, or a good or bad decision” (p. 479).

Reading is about making connections (Bintz, 2015). Connecting texts in meaningful ways with clear intentions, benefits your students at a greater level rather than using single texts or even randomly connecting texts. Also, when you vary your types of textual connections, students show increased learning of content material, greater comprehension, and more authenticity to their learning (Ciecierski, 2017).

We recommend varying the types of connections that you and your students make. Altering between the use of companion texts (texts connected by topic) and corresponding texts (texts connected by theme) has proven results. You could also utilize contradictory texts. These treasures are more difficult to find but are connected by discrepancy related to either the topic or the theme (Ciecierski, 2017). Recognizing that companion, corresponding, and contradictory are different ways of connecting texts is the first step. The second step is determining which type of intertextually connected text will you use for your instruction. Will you utilize paired text, tri-texts, cluster texts, or text sets?

One of the most common types of connections are made with paired or twin texts, that is two connected texts (Camp, 2000). Paired texts might connect a picturebook with a textbook, a poem with an article, or even a picturebook and the author’s note to build on information learned by reading the picturebook. Tri-texts are also an option with added benefits (Ciecierski & Bintz, 2018). Simply stated, a tri-text consists of three intertextually connected texts. Tri-texts are a valuable tool to use to extend beyond paired text and so are cluster texts.

Cluster texts are connected by theme and/or topic and are like a text set but have one distinguishable feature: the first book read matters and is identified as the way-in text (Ciecierski, 2017). We use way-in texts to create cluster texts. However, way-in texts can stand by themselves. In terms of cluster texts, the way-in text is the text that is recommended as the first text read with the purpose of forming a foundation or inspiring interest. The other texts are connected in a way that either extends or substantiates meaning. We chose to showcase cluster texts in this article because we believe that cluster texts have the most potential for our students to see themselves in the texts around them.

The Value of Students Seeing Themselves in the Text Around Them

We have learned from experience that students naturally evaluate their surroundings by making observations and drawing conclusions. When a student sees a classroom poster promoting success, they may feel motivated and inspired. When the learning target is posted, students' progress and achievement is regulated (Moss & Brookhart, 2012). However, when students observe their peers, the thought processes can be much different. Students evaluate and internalize similarities such as skin color, accents, clothing, abilities and so much more. This continues through conversations about their homelives and social activities. Students can recognize what is deemed *normal* or *acceptable* and whether they feel as though they meet this ideal.

In our experiences, we have observed that using carefully chosen inclusive texts can bring a new dimension of diversity to the classroom. Inclusive readings are designed to make texts relevant to more readers and simultaneously expand how texts are interpreted (Skrlac Lo, 2019). These texts allow students to see a variety of lifestyles, challenges, and ethnicities. They provide a new atmosphere in which students can see themselves in the characters and explore their ideologies.

In today's classroom, teachers more than ever can share the responsibility to approach conversations which promote equity. We define equity as students seeing themselves as equally valued members of a classroom community of learners. Using picture books in our classrooms has shown to create opportunities for students to collectively explore their curiosities, while in turn helping us, the teachers, to guide these conversations. Children need a place to begin the critical introduction to culturally sensitive ideas and concepts of social justice (Norris, 2020). When students begin to see themselves in the texts and conversation, they feel safe and included.

Cluster Texts to Show Multiple Perspectives

When we think about cluster texts, we are reminded of the value in showing students multiple perspectives. We want our students to accept and value differences, potentially building self-worth, community, and acceptance. Here, we share three cluster texts to represent three points of consideration that we believe are prevalent in many classes. We highlight the way-in text first in detail and then share multiple texts that the way-in text might be surrounded by.

When using cluster texts in the classroom, the teacher would utilize the way-in text first. This could be as an interactive read aloud where the teacher would stop periodically and engage students in conversation, or it could be part of a shared reading lesson with all students reading a copy of the text. Following the reading of the way-in text, students would read other books in the cluster. This might take a variety of formats, depending on the purpose. Perhaps all students read all the texts. Maybe small groups of students focus on individual books and then come together to share what they learned. There is not a prescriptive way to implement cluster texts in the classroom. Decisions can be made based on purpose as well as the needs of the students.

As previously stated, picturebooks can be utilized with children of all ages, adolescents, and adults. We chose picturebooks that could primarily be used in elementary school classrooms. We begin by sharing a cluster text that lays a foundation for learning and centers around going to school. The second cluster text was created to celebrate the uncelebrated through overcoming challenges. The third cluster text represents diverse family dynamics and experiences.

Developing an Understanding of Inclusion and Empathy

All students experience school in some way. However, culture, religious belief, and race diversify this educational experience. Here is a cluster text that contains characters that are diverse in cultural representation. This cluster text may begin the exploration of multiple stories. In exploring this cluster text, students might gain appreciation for school. They might also build empathy for those who have much different school experiences than they do.

The Day You Begin (Woodson, 2018) captivates the reader through its use of color and relatable childhood experiences. This picturebook highlights moments when students may come to school feeling as though they are different. In addition, the author's voice gives the reader a sense of being spoken to. Each situation provides a moment where students can instantly see themselves in the story, whether they are the student feeling left out, or a part of the class. Raphael Lopez, the illustrator, utilizes color tones that change as if to show the characters being in two different worlds. The student who appears to be left out is illustrated with a background of soft, but duller tone colors of a lonely world, while the remaining students are illustrated with bright, vibrant colors and pictures that include the other children together in a happy, inclusive world.

At first glimpse, we see a little girl peeking into the classroom, accompanied by the narration "There will be times when you walk into a room and no one there is quite like you." The phrase "there will be times when" is presented as though the author is speaking to the little girl, reassuring her that some moments are difficult to cope with.

Next, we see this same little girl sitting alone during share time. There is a buzz of excitement of children sharing their stories and souvenirs from their summer vacation. We see her reflection to her own summer experience where she cared for her younger sister. Her escape to new adventures was done by reading on her fire escape. In this moment, we can understand the feeling of uncertainty as she looks over the building tops at the pigeons flying in the sky. Here, the reader is presented with a moment of inquiry, "What good is this when other students were flying and sailing and going somewhere." This moment of inquiry draws the reader to make a personal connection with the character and the self-doubt she is experiencing, as well as the beginning yearning for a connection with her siblings. The author continues this inquiry through a variety of examples from sitting alone at lunch time to watching others play at recess. Each time using the phrase "there will be times when." All the while, the color pattern continues, and we find the child who is left out venturing farther and farther from the group.

We find a shift in the story as the author delivers an empowering message of resiliency. The reader is shown a child who has become so left out that he is completely alone standing in dry, brown grass at the edge of the water holding a book, peering at his reflection. In his reflection, we can see the bright, vibrant colors shooting out from his book, his face full of joy, as though he can see the happiness that has come from being brave. The illustrations give additional insight into the character's internal struggle supporting the reader to see how the character is wanting the happiness of being included.

The focus returns to the little girl as the author's phrase has become empowering "There will be times when you walk into a room and no one there is quite like you until the day you share your stories." We see the girl share her summer vacation. The color tones of the illustrations stay bright. All the children are talking, laughing, and playing together. It's here in the story we see the phrase "This is the day you begin." The reader can connect to the internal struggle of the character and the bravery she made the choice to share her story.

Using *The Day You Begin* as a way-in text for a cluster text centering on going to school (see Table 1) is an excellent foundation for developing an understanding of inclusion and empathy within the school setting.

Table 1: Developing an Understanding of Inclusion and Empathy

Title	Author(s) & Year	Synopsis
<i>*The Day You Begin</i>	Woodson, 2018	Way-in text described above.
<i>The Arabic Quilt</i>	Khalil, 2020	Kanzi and her family moved to America from Egypt. When Kanzi is feeling homesick she wraps herself up in the quilt her Teita (grandmother) made her. Kanzi enjoys her school, but feels hurt when the other children laugh at her when she speaks in Arabic. Kanzi's teacher invites her mother to school to make a class quilt, with each student having a square with their name written in Arabic. This brings excitement and togetherness to the classroom.
<i>Dreamers</i>	Morales, 2018	Every mother has a dream for her child. <i>Dreamers</i> is a story of a mother's dream of building a better life for her newborn child. She dreams of their journey together as immigrants to America, the challenges they will face, and the opportunities they find.
<i>The Girl Who Buried Her Dreams in a Can</i>	Trent & Gilchrist, 2015	In this true story of Dr. Tererai Trent, we follow Dr. Trent's journey of perseverance as a young girl in a village in Zimbabwe, desperate to learn to read. She secretly learns to read and write with the help of her brother. After the war, she dreamt of an education in America. With the help of her fellow villagers, she is able to travel to America and attend college. She studies and earns degrees until she reaches the highest level. Upon achieving her goals, she returns to her village to fulfill her dream of bringing education to the boys and girls of Zimbabwe.
<i>Nasreen's Secret School</i>	Winter, 2009	In this true story set in Afghanistan, Nasreen's town is overcome by soldiers during the war. The soldiers were harsh with rules and how they treated the villagers. Girls are no longer allowed to attend school. Villagers like Nasreen's mother came up missing. Nasreen becomes withdrawn, not speaking to others. Her grandmother sneaks her to a secret school. Going to school brings her friendships and hope. She discovers the world outside of Afghanistan and the dreams that are to come.
<i>Steamboat School</i>	Hopkinson & Husband, 2016	Based on true events from 1847 Missouri, Hopkins retells the struggles brought to African Americans when a law is made that no African Americans may learn in the state of Missouri. Devastated, the reverend with the help of a boy named James, use their ingenuity to continue learning on a steamboat on the Mississippi River.

Celebrating the Uncelebrated Through Overcoming Challenges

Life is full of challenges. While we should acknowledge and learn from the challenges that we do not overcome, we believe that it is also beneficial to celebrate overcoming challenges. In addition, when students recognize each other's obstacles, challenges, successes, and failures, there is an opportunity to build a strong community of learners.

All Because You Matter (Charles, 2020) is unique in that it speaks right to the reader. Written in second person point of view, the message that YOU matter is prevalent and woven throughout. You mattered "long before you took your place in this world." With a closer look, the

reader sees the magnificent artistry of Caldecott Honor Winner and illustrator, Bryan Collier. Through collage, we see multiple faces woven in the quilting cloth being designed by many hands. This “quilt” is worn as a stunning headdress on the next page. Amongst the colorful design shown like peacock feathers, we see that the faces are different. Some are looking at the reader while others show side images. Still others show faces with eyes closed. In another feather, we only see an eye. The arrangement and presentation suggest the diversity of those who matter.

The reader is taken through birth, first steps, first words, and opening a book. The book shows a person who looks just like you, a young Brown boy. The author shares how the boy sees himself in the characters with the “same hair, same skin, same dreams.” The author also shares how the words and pictures come together because “you matter.” Not everything is always sugar coated and as the story continues, we see that “light does not always reach lonely planets, covered moons, stars unseen, and if matter no longer exists.” We see children laughing in the back as the question “what kind of a name is that?” is posed.

The author shares how life is full of obstacles: seeing big red X’s on a math page might make you question if you, your work, and your effort matter; looking at the news to see people taking a breath, taking a stand, taking a knee; hearing whispered prayers as another name is called Trayvon, Tamir, Philando and wondering *if they, or you, will ever matter*.

With the turn of a page, we shift to the main character looking right at us. We read, “Did you know that you were born from queens, chiefs, legends?” Through all of creation and from the beginning of time “you mattered, they mattered. We matter. . . and always will.” This way-in text sets the stage and sends a message of resiliency. Despite the obstacles our students encounter, they matter. Each student is an important member of our classrooms just like the many colorful and unique feathers in the headdress shown in the book. This book is perfect to introduce stories about individuals who faced obstacles and succeed, despite the challenges (see Table 2).

Table 2: Celebrating the Uncelebrated Through Overcoming Challenges

Title	Author(s) & Year	Synopsis
<i>*All Because You Matter</i>	Charles, 2020	Way-in text described above.
<i>All the Way to the Top: How One Girl's Fight for Americans With Disabilities Changed Everything</i>	Pimentel, 2020	This is the true story of Jennifer Keelan-Chaffins who never let her wheelchair slow her down even if the world around her made it hard for disabled individuals to do simple things like go to school or eat in the cafeteria. She joined activists in Washington D.C. for what became known as the Capitol Crawl as she climbed all the way to the top without her wheelchair when the Americans with Disabilities Act was proposed to Congress.
<i>Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofosu Yeboah</i>	Thompson, 2015	Emmanuel was born in Ghana, West Africa with one deformed leg. He was dismissed by many people but never by his mother, who always taught him to reach for his dreams. When he was young, he hopped more than two miles to school. He learned to play soccer. At the age of thirteen, he left home to provide for his family and became a cyclist. He rode four hundred miles across Ghana, showing many how determination pays off and a disability does not have to be an inability.
<i>I Talk Like a River</i>	Scott, 2020	The Schneider Family Award is awarded each year to an author or illustrator for a book with artistic expression of the disability experience. In 2020, <i>I Talk Like a River</i> won this prestigious award. We are taken through a young boy's day. He wakes up silent. Words stuck in his mouth, he eats his breakfast without

		saying a word. After school, his dad picks him up and consoling him, tells him that he talks like a river. The story is based on the author's experience.
Michael Rosen's Sad Book	Rosen, 2004	Michael is sad. At times, his sadness takes over his mind, leaving him helpless. At other times, Michael is angry. Sometimes he wants to just disappear. Michael suffers from mental illness, attributed partially to the loss of his son Eddie. Readers are brought into Michael's life and his struggles.
Rescue & Jessica: A Life-Changing Friendship	Kensky & Downes, 2018	This heart-warming story personifies Rescue, a dog meant to be a Seeing Eye Dog, just as his family members were. Rescue is surprised that he is going to be a service dog. Jessica's life is different than she expected, too. A runner in the Boston Marathon, Jessica became a double amputee after surviving the bombing. Rescue and Jessica's friendship is a valuable one as each helps the other survive.

Diverse Family Dynamics and Experiences

Today, the students in our classrooms differ in their family dynamics and experiences. In 1960, eighty-eight percent of children lived with both parents (United States Census Bureau, 2016). That number is much lower now. In our classrooms, there are children from single parent homes and homes with divorced parents. Additionally, we have students from interracial families as well as families with same sex parents. Children without homes, and children with incarcerated parents are also amongst our students today. For those who are not privy to these backgrounds, they may feel in a position where they do not know what to do or what to say. Realizing that each one of us is "good" and can do amazing things is an important first step.

I Am Every Good Thing (Barnes & James, 2020) makes the perfect way-in text for a cluster text centered around diverse family dynamics and experiences. Written in first person, the main character shares how he is every good thing as we read "I am a nonstop ball of energy. Powerful and full of light. I am a go-getter. A difference maker. A leader. I am every good thing that makes the world go round." One of the beauties of this book is that the portrayal of the boy is not just positive. While we read that he is "good to the core, like the center of a cinnamon roll" and see him playing with his friends, we also see him fall while doing skateboard tricks but getting back on his feet, despite his scraped knees and elbows.

The authors take us through the boy's life in a relatable way that illustrates his experiences. For example, when they write that the main character is a gentleman and a scholar, it is followed by saying he is "kind and polite, like, 'yes, ma'am,' and 'yes, sir,' helping my grandmother cross the street, and saying 'bless you' when a stranger has to sneeze." We learn about the boy in terms of learning, having fun, being musically and athletically talented. We also learn that he is an important member in the world around him as a "brother, son, nephew, favorite cousin, grandson, and friend." This boy is "real" and recognizes that even though he is something of a superhero, there are times when he is afraid. Despite this, he shares that he is brave, hope, worthy of success, and worthy to be loved. Being worthy to be loved and worthy to be valued is a valuable message to send and be heard in our diverse classrooms making this the perfect way-in text for a cluster text on diverse family dynamics and experiences (see Table 3).

Table 3: Diverse Family Dynamics and Experiences

Title	Author(s) & Year	Synopsis
<i>*I Am Every Good Thing</i>	Barnes & James, 2020	Way-in text described above.
<i>Knock, Knock: My Dad's Dream for Me</i>	Beaty, 2013	Every day the young boy in the story plays a game with his father. His father comes to his room and says "knock, knock," and the boy pretends to be asleep. One day, his father does not come. He does not come the next day or the day after that, either. While the reader does not truly know what happened to the father, the author's note leads the reader to the conclusion that he may have been incarcerated. As the reader, we travel through the boy's life as he becomes a man and a father.
<i>Heather Has Two Mommies</i>	Newman, 2016	Heather loves the number two. She has two arms, two legs, two pets, and two mommies. She does not have a daddy. When she goes to school, and the children all draw pictures of their families, Heather learns that there are not any families that are the same. Everyone is different in their own way.
<i>A Shelter in our Car</i>	Gunning, 2004	Zettie and her mother had a warm and comfortable home in Jamaica. When they come to America, they are forced to live in their car. Mama cannot find a steady job, and Papa is gone. Despite the situation, Mama's love is unwavering and shows Zettie that they can meet all challenges.
<i>The Case for Loving: The Fight for Interracial Marriage</i>	Alko, 2015	Richard Loving was White, and his wife Mildred was American and Cherokee. They were married in Washington D.C. Their marriage was forbidden in Virginia, where they lived, so when they returned home, they were arrested. Their fight went all the way to the Supreme Court, where they finally won. They changed the world for interracial couples and showed the unfairness of any law that restricts who you are allowed to love.
<i>Love</i>	de la Pena, 2018	This book reminds readers that there is love all around us. Even when parents fight, there is still love and something bright to look to. Everything can be called love, from shared joy to comfort in the darkness.

Final Thoughts

I (Lisa, the first author) still remember when I read *Knock, Knock* to my seventh-grade classroom. I had taken over a seventh-grade classroom in December, so I was a new teacher to them, even though I had many years of experience. We were reading and analyzing the picturebook, projected on a large screen. In those first days in the classroom, it was one of the few times during the day where all students were focused and engaged. The students had struggled with focus and appropriate behavior all school year. One student interrupted the reading at the point that the boy's father disappears. He laughed and said, "I bet you he went to jail." He looked around at his classmates trying to get them to join in his laughter. This student was trying to get the attention of his peers but was taken aback when I read the end of the book that shared that yes, indeed, the boy's father was in jail. In that moment, my students began to look at me differently. Instead of seeing a white, middle-class female in front of them, they saw someone who "got it." They saw someone who understood that we all have stories and experiences who shape who we are and that our differences deserve to be celebrated as do our similarities. This showed in the way they interacted with me; it also showed in the focus and effort they showed towards their studies.

For this article, we chose three cluster texts to share. We reflected on the students we have taught during our years in education to choose these three clusters. These are just ideas, but we hope through our creations, we have demonstrated how to create cluster texts that are culturally and linguistically diverse. There are many books to choose from when building libraries that represent the students in your classrooms. Additionally, there are many ways that teachers can utilize cluster texts in the classroom. We have suggested a few. There are many more. We wholeheartedly believe in the value of sharing multiple stories and in having our students feel represented in our classrooms. We know that this sense of value and belonging has great potential to stimulate interest, community, and deep learning.

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Tips for Planning a Successful Author Visit

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ABSTRACT

Author visits are an exciting way to generate students' interest in reading and writing. They offer the opportunity for students to hear directly from an author about the process and value of various texts. However, successful author visits require careful planning and collaboration. This teaching tip article explains how author visits can support learning outcomes, describes the steps involved in planning a visit, and identifies possibilities to fund a school or campus visit.

KEYWORDS

author visit;
children's
literature; literacy
promotion

An author visit occurs when a writer or illustrator visits a classroom to educate learners about their books, writing process, inspirations for writing, etc. Author visits can be impactful for K–12 students, such as motivating them to tell their own stories (Booth, 2018) and generating excitement about reading and writing (Murphy et al., 2014). Meeting an author can also be a meaningful experience for college students. Walker and Feldman (2014) investigated the effect virtual children's author visits would have on pre-service teachers (i.e., teacher candidates). The researchers had their teacher candidates interview authors virtually as part of a college children's literature course. Using Skype video calls, they found that “teacher candidates were able to converse with a children's author, thus gaining a deeper understanding of the use of children's literature, author's visits, and technology in their own teaching” (Walker & Feldman, 2014, p. 39). Based on the findings of this research, we sought to use an author visit to better prepare elementary/special education teacher candidates for teaching with and about nonfiction children's books.

We created a half-day professional development workshop for candidates enrolled in our institution's elementary/special education program. The workshop focused on the nonfiction genre of children's literature, including types of nonfiction, using nonfiction books to teach the craft of writing, and integrating nonfiction across subject areas in the elementary-level curriculum. It was led by Patricia Newman, an award-winning author of nonfiction books for children. Our goal in implementing this workshop was to help the candidates in our courses develop a stronger appreciation of the nonfiction genre and a deeper understanding of pedagogical possibilities for nonfiction books. We shared our goals with Ms. Newman, who valued the collaboration and designed her presentation accordingly. She said, “My goal is to supplement your classroom

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curriculum, not distract from it. That’s why my visits empower readers of all ages to think about the world from different points of view and then make connections to their own lives” (Newman, personal communication, January 2, 2023).

Specific outcomes were for candidates to know why children enjoy reading nonfiction and to be able to describe types of nonfiction, as well as to explain approaches and strategies for teaching nonfiction text structures and informational writing traits. We also wanted candidates to understand various ways to integrate nonfiction across the curriculum. As a result, our candidates would be better prepared for leading elementary classrooms of their own. After participating in the author visit, one candidate shared:

I realized that I can use nonfiction to engage reluctant readers and to support curiosity in my students. I actually tried using a nonfiction book to engage a reluctant reader in my current placement, and it worked! She read the whole thing quickly and was excited to talk to me about it!

Outcomes like this one are what we hoped to achieve through the author visit.

Planning an Author Visit

Preparing for our author visit with Patricia Newman involved making multiple decisions. These decisions are outlined step-by-step in Table 1 and described throughout the rest of this section. First, we had to determine a date for Ms. Newman to come and how to accommodate the large number of teacher candidates that would attend her presentation. We decided to separate our students into two groups so that the half-day professional development workshop could be offered twice in the same day, one in the morning at one location and another in the afternoon at a different location. This was necessary for finding a space with enough capacity for everyone, but also to allow for a more personalized experience that made the interactive activities more manageable.

Table 1: Steps for Planning an Author Visit

Step 1	Reflect on the standards and units in your grade level or course to decide what type of literature and which author would align best with your needs.
Step 2	Identify a date and time for the visit.
Step 3	Determine the size of the audience and secure space.
Step 4	Contact the author and schedule the visit.
Step 5	Discuss details of the presentation and coordinating necessary materials with the author.

Through a virtual meeting with Ms. Newman, we were able to discuss what the presentation would look like and begin coordinating her travel plans. We talked about how Ms. Newman’s visit could connect to the objectives of the content literacy and children’s literature courses our teacher candidates were taking at the time of the scheduled author visit. For example, Ms. Newman’s suggestion to explain the different types of nonfiction during her workshop directly supported one of the main objectives of the children’s literature course, which examines formats and genres of youth literature.

As professors, we discussed how best to prepare our teacher candidates for Ms. Newman’s visit. We wanted to make certain that candidates had exposure to at least a couple of her books before the workshop was held. This involved scheduling them in our course calendars prior to the

visit and deciding which ones fit best with our courses. In their children's literature course, candidates were asked to read Newman's 2018 Sibert Honor book, *Sea Otter Heroes: The Predators that Saved an Ecosystem*. They were introduced to Newman's (2004) book, *Jingle the Brass*, in the content literacy course through a model lesson demonstrating how to use it as a mentor text when teaching informational writing to elementary students.

An additional virtual meeting took place between the three of us and Ms. Newman within a couple of weeks of the scheduled workshop. The purpose was to finalize details in terms of what materials we needed to have with us and what she would need as a presenter. A major part of making the workshop meaningful and interactive was to have enough nonfiction books for the teacher candidates to explore to gain a better understanding of the possibilities associated with what Ms. Newman was teaching them. This required us to pull books from our personal and public libraries and to coordinate with one another to ensure we had nonfiction books that fell into the specific categories Ms. Newman would be referencing when presenting to the teacher candidates (see Stewart & Correia, 2021, for details about the five categories of nonfiction).

While we designed this author visit for teacher candidates at the university level, we believe K–12 teachers could follow a similar path in planning their own author visit. Among the factors to consider when developing a plan would be to reflect on your standards and units in your grade level and decide what type of literature and which author would align best with your needs. If you are not sure where to start finding potential authors, there are websites available that provide information about authors who are willing to do school visits. For example, the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators at [scbwi.org/speakers-bureau](https://www.scbwi.org/speakers-bureau) allows you to search based on author's name, student age level, and topic. Additionally, publishing companies' websites may offer information on author visits, and many published authors have their own websites, which can provide useful information regarding having the author come to your school for a visit. You can even seek recommendations from your school's media specialist.

Once you have determined which author is coming, you should consider when and how you can integrate some of the author's work into your classroom prior to the author visit. Providing students with the opportunity to interact with the author's work prior to meeting them can make the visit more meaningful. Collaborating with your school's media specialist to integrate the author's texts could also prove beneficial.

Funding is certainly something to consider, including how much you might need and where you can obtain it. There are many options available if you take the time to search. In fact, some possibilities are included in the next section to help you get started in your search.

Funding an Author Visit

When planning an author visit, locating funds is a foremost consideration. We were fortunate that an internal grant from our university funded Ms. Newman's honorarium and travel, and we were even able to purchase copies of her books to share with teacher candidates during her visit. While not all institutions offer such financial support, other grant opportunities are available to educators. Table 2 summarizes some of these possibilities.

Nonprofit groups are one potential source of funding. Professional organizations for educators sometimes offer grants and awards to support classroom or school-wide projects. For example, the Georgia Council of Teachers of English offers mini-grants of up to \$500 for educators planning projects that will directly impact the literacy experiences of K–12 students. Other nonprofits also provide support. The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi offers grants of up to \$2,500 specifically for literacy projects. While one must be a member of this honor society to apply,

educators could collaborate on an application with a university-based chapter if they are not members themselves. Many Georgia colleges and universities have chapters, including the University of Georgia, Kennesaw State University, University of West Georgia, and the University of North Georgia.

In addition, philanthropic organizations provide funding for educators. The Dollar General Literacy Foundation has a variety of grants; the Youth Literacy Grant may be especially appropriate for educators who wish to spark students' excitement about reading and writing with an author visit. Educators who teach children from low-income families are eligible to apply for a McCarthy Dressman Education Foundation grant. This grant, which provides up to \$10,000 annually and is renewable for a second year, is intended to fund both in-class and extracurricular enrichment opportunities. Believe in Reading, which is supported by the Steve and Loree Potash Family Foundation, also provides grants to schools serving children with exceptional needs. Another possibility is the Voya Unsung Heroes Awards Program, which provides up to \$2,000 to educators who facilitate innovative projects directly impacting students' learning.

Sponsorships are another avenue for author visit funding. Barnes and Noble provides sponsorships to schools at the local level; inquiries about sponsorships may be directed to store managers. Local businesses may also be willing to provide financial assistance.

Table 2: Grant Opportunities for Literacy Projects

Organization	Website
Barnes and Noble	barnesandnobleinc.com/about-bn/sponsorships-charitable-donations
Believe in Reading	believeinreading.org/grant-guidelines
Dollar General Literacy Foundation	dgliteracy.org/grant-programs/
Georgia Council of Teachers of English	wildapricot.org/GCTE-Teacher-Minigrants
Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi	phikappaphi.org/grants-awards/literacy
McCarthy Dressman Education Foundation	mccartheydressman.org/academic-enrichment-grants/
Voya Unsung Heroes Awards Program	apply.scholarsapply.org/unsungheroes/

Conclusion

During Ms. Newman's visit, the three of us were able to observe our teacher candidates working with the books and engaging in discussions about how they could be used in classrooms. We distributed a post-survey asking them to rate their comfort levels with nonfiction texts and share what they learned. Although we did not receive a significant number of responses, the ones we received demonstrated that the author visit was beneficial. We were also able to engage in informal conversations with candidates after the visit, and these also showed that the candidates had enjoyed it and learned from it. One student said the visit allowed him to "see all the different ways that

nonfiction can be used in the classroom,” and after the visit, he understood, “that nonfiction has a place in the classroom that should never be taken away.” Another student echoed her peer’s statement in claiming that the visit helped her “gain a greater perspective on the benefits of including nonfiction literature in the classroom.” Specifically, she stated that she knows now that nonfiction allows students to “make real-world connections and apply critical thinking skills.”

Prior to the author visit, teacher candidates experienced two of Patricia Newman’s books in their college courses. They saw a model of using nonfiction mentor texts to teach informational writing using *Jingle the Brass* (Newman, 2004), and they read *Sea Otter Heroes: The Predators That Saved an Ecosystem* (2017) as a book club assignment. Ms. Newman noted the value of this practice: “The most meaningful author events establish a genuine connection between me and your students. One way to fuel this connection is by reading my books with students and integrating them into your curriculum” (Newman, personal communication, January 2, 2023). To advance that connection, it is valuable to have students continue working with the author’s works after the visit. Based on the timeline for our grant proposal and candidates’ course calendars, some had already completed assignments that would have allowed them to directly implement tips that Ms. Newman provided. Coordinating an opportunity for application of learning after the author visit would likely produce more long-term impact on candidates’ instructional strategies.

While planning an author visit, consider your space and resource availability. If you have a specific author in mind for the visit, their website may provide valuable information for planning the visit. Patricia Newman has a frequently-asked question page and video to support educators in scheduling author visits (Newman, 2023). Ms. Newman was intentional in making her visit interactive. Teacher candidates reviewed a wide variety of nonfiction styles across children’s books. They browsed about 30 books in small groups. This format was very effective in helping our students understand the content of her presentation more deeply. Gathering the books for this component took forethought. We used our personal and public libraries as resources to gather more than enough nonfiction texts for the visit. Our first professional development session took place in an auditorium. Teacher candidates were in rows and did not have tables. In our second session, candidates were in an amphitheater-style room with tables on each level. This was much more conducive to collaboration and efficient transitions.

Collaboration was key throughout the process of implementing an author visit. Working as a team allowed us to discuss the objectives of this professional development opportunity from a variety of perspectives, as we teach different candidates in different courses. Communication with the author helped facilitate planning important components, including the necessary materials. Careful collaborative planning led to a successful event that met our goal to help teacher candidates develop a stronger appreciation of nonfiction literature and a deeper understanding of pedagogical possibilities for nonfiction books.

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Building Classroom Community in Elementary Literacy Methods Courses

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ABSTRACT

In this article, two elementary teacher educators provide a novel approach to building relationships and classroom community in their face to face elementary literacy methods courses. The authors present their classroom practice entitled “Tell Me Time” (TMT), mirroring morning meetings in K–12 settings, as the staple of building classroom community in their courses. They describe how TMT has been used to build student relationships with each other and with instructors through providing unique, personalized opportunities to socialize and connect through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Threaded throughout, the authors detail specific feedback from students and highlight how TMT has helped students find common ground with one another and made them feel comfortable, cared for, and respected by their instructors. The authors describe the reasons behind implementing TMT, outline specific TMT activities and examples that have been most effective with their students, provide insight into how to integrate technology with TMT, delineate specific steps for successfully implementing TMT, and describe lessons learned from the implementation of TMT.

KEYWORDS

classroom
community;
building
relationships;
elementary
literacy methods;
morning
meetings;
teacher
education;
teaching with
technology

***T**ell me time is by far my favorite part of this class. Thank you for getting to know us as individuals and not just a number and for allowing us to get to know one another in such fun and creative ways. I can’t wait to do this with my own students when I get my own classroom!*

Several years ago, we were in conversation with a colleague of ours who shared a simple strategy that she uses at the start of her class sessions. She said at the beginning of each of her classes, she starts off with “tell me something good” and has a few students share ideas. Who knew that this brief conversation would inspire an idea for us that has become the heart of our classes that binds our students and us together? In our Language Arts Methods and Creative Arts and Children’s Literature Across the Curriculum classes, we begin each class session with what we call “Tell Me Time” (TMT). During these 5–7 minutes, we conduct short, literacy-based activities in which we build classroom community, get to know one another, and simply take a much needed brain break. While this concept as a whole is not new, it takes the form of activities such as “Morning Meetings” in K–12 classrooms (Northeast Foundation for Children, 2009), and we have evolved it to fit our literacy methods courses in teacher education. Starting our class sessions with TMT allows us to

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begin class sessions in a positive manner, and the feedback we received from the students is overwhelmingly positive. After seeking anonymous feedback on TMT through a Google Form, a recent student stated, “I think it’s something unique and I have never had a teacher or professor do something like this ever.” Frisby and Munoz (2021) stated, “For the well-being of both students and faculty it is important to have positive and healthy rapport” (p. 142). Our students agree and have shared, “I also enjoy tell me time because it gives us time to debrief and decompress from other classes that might be stressing us out” and “I think it is a great idea, and I really enjoy it. I think this should be in all classes to make students feel like they are being heard!” TMT has become a well-known part of these two courses we teach, and students look forward to it each session as we merge social and academic learning (Northeast Foundation for Children, 2009).

In this article, we will begin by delineating the research that supports the ways in which we build relationships and classroom community through TMT. We will provide samples of personalized feedback for TMT journal responses, as well as samples of how we use technology to enhance TMT through our students’ digital interactive journals. Next, we outline specific steps to successfully get started and implement TMT. The article concludes with lessons we have learned and final thoughts.

Building Relationships to Create Classroom Community

Shields-Lysiak et al. (2020) stated, “In a supportive classroom community, the teacher models how to show care, and encourages students to care for each other” (p. 43). TMT has provided us with the perfect opportunity to model how to create a caring classroom community where students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences with each other and with us.

Noddings (2005) urges the public to take responsibility for raising “healthy, competent, and happy children” (p. 14), and she argues that academic achievement in schools is unobtainable when children are not provided with a caring environment. We take this stance and argue the importance of translating this belief and practice into our college courses; it is critical that we take care of our pre-service teachers before we can take care of our curricular goals and objectives. Our ultimate goal when implementing TMT is for students to begin to feel a sense of ease and joy when entering and learning in our courses, while simultaneously learning more about one another. While students are completing the TMT activity/prompt of the day, we walk around the room observing and informally commenting in order to make one-on-one connections to build and sustain relationships with our students. Once everyone has completed their TMT activity/response, we open the floor for volunteer share time as a whole class. This is where we truly build classroom community by modeling how to listen, connect, and build relationships through teacher-student interactions and student-student interactions. One student provided feedback on TMT and stated, “I love how much y’all try to get to know us!! It makes this class more enjoyable, and it makes me know how much y’all care about us!!” It is clear that students feel cared for and supported through the planned TMT interactions, responses, and discussions with their peers and instructors.

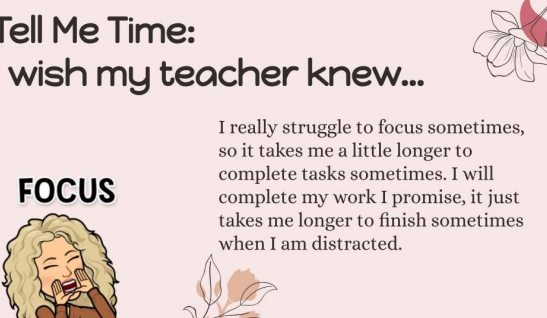
When we asked for feedback on TMT, one student stated, “The best part of it is getting to know my peers because in college it can be hard to connect with others.” When students are able to share their ideas and personal experiences with others, they often find out they have more in common with their peers than they originally thought, and this makes students feel included, rather than alone. TMT allows students to begin to build relationships with their peers in non-intimidating ways and results in connections with new classmates or new connections with current friends. Another student echoed this, saying, “It helps me to feel comfortable around my peers and get to know them a little better.” This comfortableness described allows us to create a safe space, where

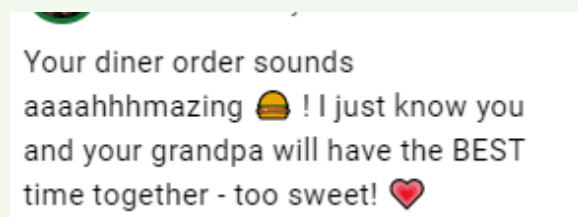
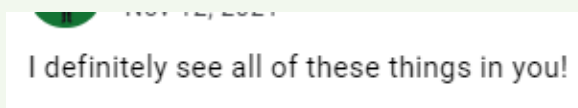
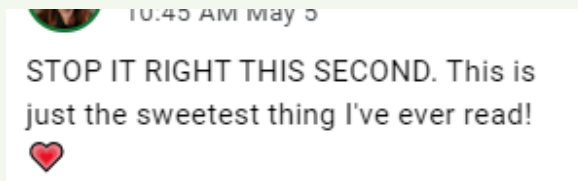
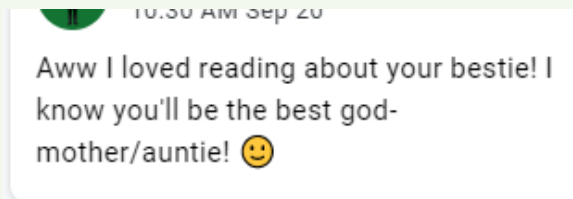
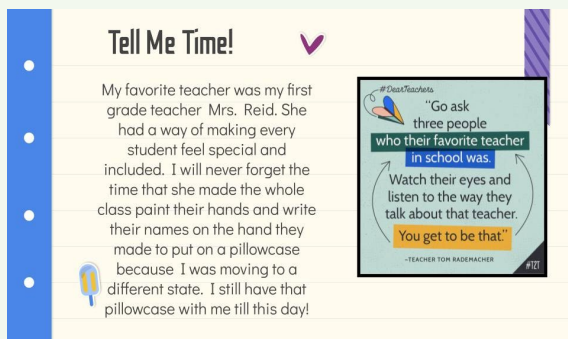
students share not only personal characteristics, but also previous academic experiences related to literacy.

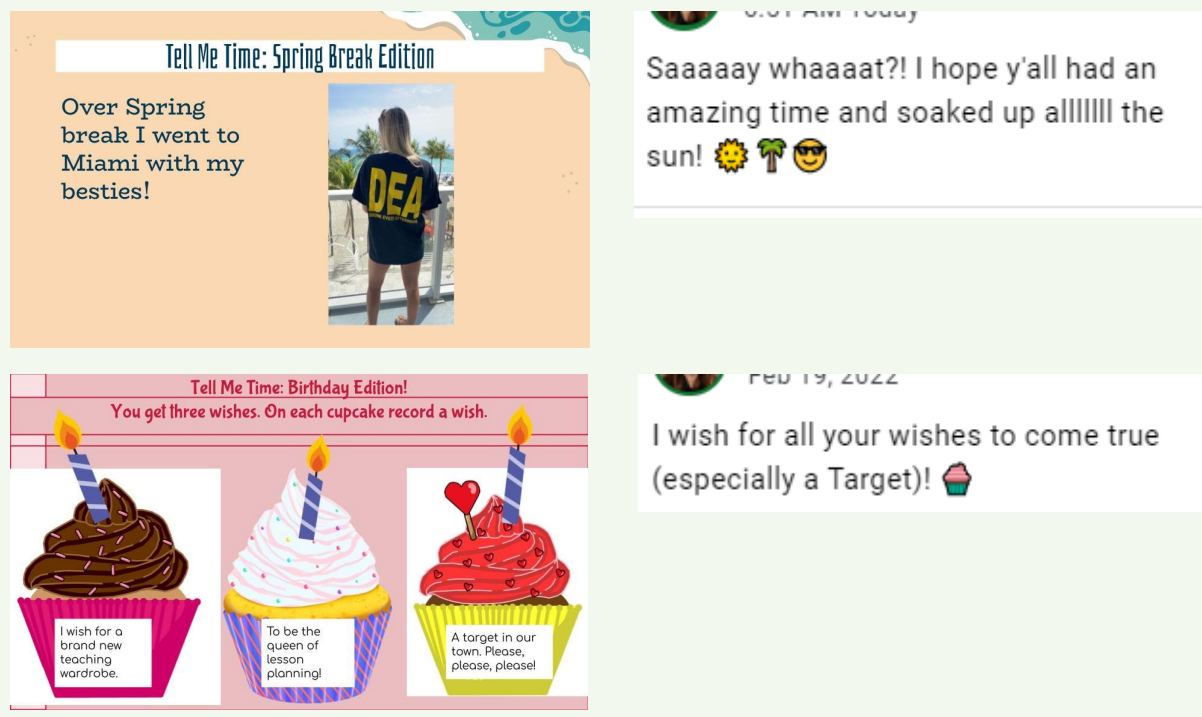
It has become critical to us, as instructors, to create these safe spaces for our students in order to provide a model of how teachers serve as facilitators and mentors, rather than authoritarian figures; hearing and respecting the voices of all of our students is central to our work during TMT. “In a learning community, the teacher is not all-knowing, all-powerful; students may and can contribute safely to the stock of classroom knowledge from their own experiences” (Cooper, 2003, pp. 87–88). When students have the opportunity to share with one another, they are able to apply their own listening and speaking skills to communicate in pairs, small groups, and whole group settings. When appropriate, we intentionally plan literacy focused TMT activities to relate to the content of the class session. During the share time, students contribute to the overall knowledge in the classroom through discussions of their literacy experiences from their own elementary days, as well as their current field placements. Alongside the stories told by our students, we as professors contribute our own classroom experiences through storytelling to deepen students’ understanding and perspectives. Kromka and Goodboy (2019) state, “While not specifically focused on narratives, recent research on effective teaching behaviors (e.g., self-disclosure, content relevance, humor) implies the potential benefits of using narratives as an effective teaching behavior” (p. 21). This practice serves as a model for the pre-service teachers to bridge these critical literacy skills that are sometimes underutilized in P–5 settings. Our ultimate goal is for our students to transfer this same student-directed, classroom community building practice into their own classrooms in order to personally connect with their students.

Another way we make meaningful connections with our students is through the feedback we provide on our students’ TMT entries in their daily digital interactive journal by using the commenting tool (Figure 1). This allows us to get to know our students on a deeper level, and we are able to make meaningful connections that are tailored to each individual student. “Feeling important and getting personalized feedback (that sounds more like text messages with my bestie!) in my interactive journal,” was cited by one student as one of their favorite parts of TMT. Google Slides, the platform our students use for their digital interactive journals, allows us to give feedback in real-time and allows us to make comments and pose questions to deepen our relationships. This also functions to give us insight and the ability to address any concerns or issues we may read in student entries; when concerns do arise, we are able to immediately reach out to students to conduct check-ins.

Figure 1: TMT Sample Personalized Feedback

Student Digital Journal TMT Entries	Sample Feedback to Students
Tell Me Time: I wish my teacher knew... FOCUS I really struggle to focus sometimes, so it takes me a little longer to complete tasks sometimes. I will complete my work I promise, it just takes me longer to finish sometimes when I am distracted. 	11:25 AM Today I completely understand - if you ever need me to slow down, please let me know! Also, it may help to give yourself some visual cues to remind yourself to go back and finish. Pro tip: Highlight things you need to go back to in bright yellow so it reminds you "hey, you didn't finish this!". 😊 Show less

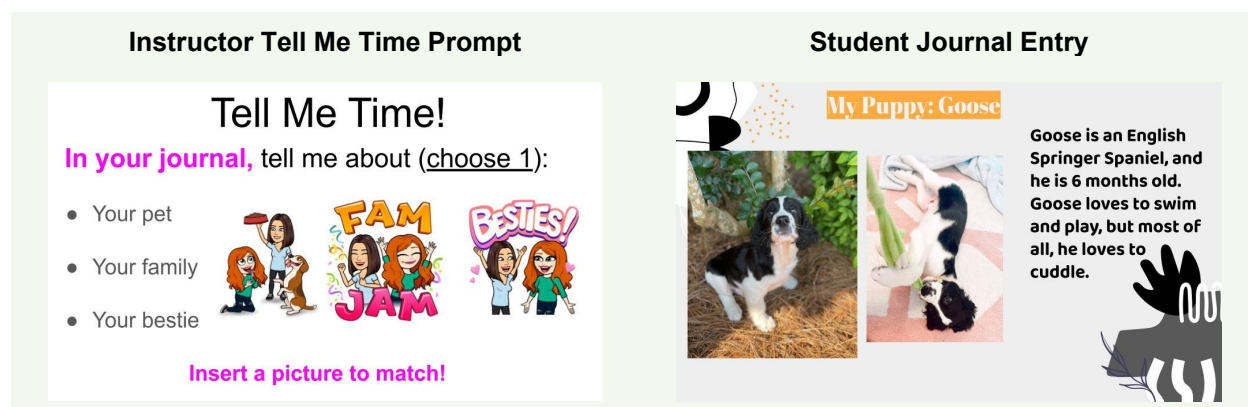




Technology and Tell Me Time

In our classes, TMTs are often captured in our students' digital interactive journals, which are used daily and, as stated above, completed in Google Slides. Students have the opportunity to digitally respond to prompts in writing and in images such as bitmojis, clipart, photographs, and gifs (Figure 2). The prompts of these TMTs often align with the content of our literacy classes, but, more often, are completely unrelated and allow us to simply make personal connections with our students and for our students to make personal connections with one another. It is easy for students to write their journal entries in their interactive journals and turn their laptop screens or tablets around to share their ideas and images with one another before sharing with the whole group. In addition to our students completing their TMT entries individually, students are also able to collaborate as a whole class or in small groups using tools such as Jamboard and Google Forms to respond to TMT prompts and activities.

Figure 2: Tell Me Time Instructor Prompts and Sample Student Journal Entries



**TELL ME TIME:
I WISH MY TEACHER KNEW EDITION**

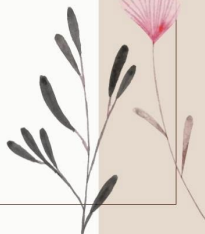
In your journal, complete this sentence:
I wish my teacher knew...

Do I need to know anything right now? If so, send me an email - like now. I got you!

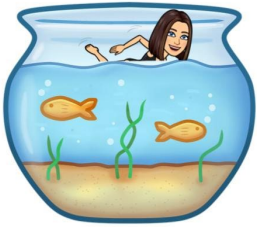


Tell Me Time: I Wish My Teacher Knew

I wish my teacher knew that even though I am quiet in class I do enjoy what we are learning, I am just shy.



Tell Me Time: Fishbowl Edition



Click me to see the TikTok that inspired today's Tell Me Time!

Insert a fish and/or fishbowl into your journal, and write a question you have for me about teaching reading or writing.

Have an unrelated question? A funny question?

Ask away!

Let's Share!



How do you motivate students to write when they absolutely despise writing?

Tell Me Time: Steps to Success

Our practices reflect the Responsive Classroom Model, as outlined in *Sample Morning Meetings in a Responsive Classroom* (2009). Each class session includes the following three components, slightly adapted and combined, in order to establish respectful learning and a trusting climate, motivate our students and fulfill our students' need for a sense of belonging in the classroom.

- **Greeting:** As students enter the classroom, we greet one another before the class session begins.
- **Activity and Sharing:** We post and describe the Tell Me Time prompt or activity in our Google Slides presentation. The students and us engage with one another in the prompt/activity and share ideas, thoughts, and feelings.
- **Morning Message:** We provide a brief overview of the class session's content and structure and provide time for students to ask questions before we begin.

Table 1 below outlines the steps to success for getting started with the implementation of TMT.

Table 1: Getting Started with Tell Me Time

Step 1	On the first day of class explain expectations and the purpose for TMT, and let students create class norms for the implementation and participation in TMT to ensure active, positive student engagement.
Step 2	Select an activity or prompt to be used for TMT (the content focus of the class session connection or click the following link for other TMT ideas for ways to connect with students personally) at the start of each class session. See this website for an example: bit.ly/3ZIEAj3
Step 3	At the start of class, explain the TMT activity/prompt, and allow students 5-7 minutes in order to process, complete, and discuss the activity/prompt.

Step 4	Once students have completed their TMT activity/prompt, allow time for students to share in pairs or small groups then open the floor for student volunteers to share with the whole group.
Step 5	Actively participate and share your personal responses to the TMT activity/prompt. During the sharing time, facilitate connections among students based on your responses and the responses of volunteers to create classroom community.
Step 6	During the current (and future!) class sessions, make personal connections in your content delivery and class activities to your students' ideas and experiences shared during TMT.
Step 7	Make explicit connections to how TMT can be transferred to your students' own classroom experiences in field placements and future classrooms.
Step 8	Add personalized feedback to your students' responses/activities that answers questions, makes personal or educational connections, or simply validates and values their responses. If you see a concern from a student's entry or response, reach out to the student and conduct a check-in.
Step 9	To ensure student engagement, vary the format of your TMTs. Students can simply turn and talk, reflect in writing or drawing (digitally or by hand), or use movement to express their thoughts, opinions, and experiences.
Step 10	Reflect. How are your students responding? Which TMT prompts or activities have students been most engaged with? Not sure? Survey your classes!

With each TMT implementation, we are evolving our TMT activities to best meet the needs of our students and model how this can be utilized in their future classrooms.

Lessons Learned

Our implementation of TMT is one that is constantly evolving based on our previous implementations, student feedback, and the ever-changing dynamics of the students in our courses. Over the last few years, we have implemented a variety of TMT activities, and we have loved, tweaked, and eliminated some based on our experiences and the voices of our students. When reflecting on the TMT activities/prompts we have adjusted or deleted, we compiled a list of ideas that we would not recommend for TMT:

- Time-consuming activities/prompts
- Physical materials or space needed
- Controversial, heavy, or emotionally charged topics
- Topics unrelated to literacy content and/or students' interests and personal experiences

We have also found that students enjoy a mixed balance of TMT activities that reflect both the content of the literacy courses, as well as fun, whimsical activities that allow students to simply unwind and engage with one another to start the class session off in a positive manner. As one student indicated, "I like that we all get to share and connect before class. Because we are all coming from different places, it is a good transition into opening class!" Students also appreciate the variety of ways in which to respond to TMT prompts and activities. They enjoy writing responses in their interactive journals and adding their own personal touches with images, bitmojis, and gifs. Students also appreciate and are engaged in times when they are able to get up and move around the classroom with "this or that" or "four corners" activities, or simply turning and talking with one another with their table groups. Perhaps the biggest lesson we have learned is making

each TMT relevant and meaningful for our teacher candidates, so they, in turn, see the power of this practice and can implement this with students of their own.

Final Thoughts

The use of TMT has provided us with an effective way to get to know our students, connect our class content with their personal and literacy experiences, and start class in a lively, carefree manner. While at first a random, barely planned out idea, TMT has become a now much more methodically designed staple applied at the beginning of each of our classes. TMTs have allowed us to help students see how to make meaningful connections, both personally and academically, to create a caring classroom community that our students can transfer to their own P-5 settings. Bernstein-Yamashiro and Noam (2013) stated, “Teacher-student relationships allow teachers to bring life to their curricula, to be effective teachers, to capitalize on their own strengths in the classroom, and to share the wisdom of their experiences” (p. 55). TMT has allowed us to do just this; students feel energized and invested in the learning of literacy content because of the teacher-student and student-student relationships built through the activities and personalized feedback provided to students. Give it a try—you and your students will not be disappointed!

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Out with the Old, in with the New: Digital Interactive Journals in an Elementary Language Arts Methods Course

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ABSTRACT

In this article, two elementary literacy teacher educators provide elementary language arts content and methods through the implementation of digital interactive journals in a face to face classroom setting. The authors present how this practice evolved from traditional interactive journals pre-COVID to an innovative and engaging learning experience post-COVID. Interactive journals provide students with opportunities to explore and apply content and methods, while also learning a teaching strategy that pre-service teachers can implement in their own elementary classrooms. The authors describe the design and development of digital interactive journals along with student work samples and instructional steps to transfer and implement this strategy across disciplines.

KEYWORDS

digital interactive journals;
instructional technology;
student engagement;
preservice teachers;
elementary literacy

One of my students recently commented: “I’m so proud of my journal and how much I’ve learned in language arts this semester. I never knew how creative I could be with technology (thank you, Google Slides!). My journal is something I will keep forever and will go back to when I get my own classroom.” When I (Kathleen) first began teaching my undergraduate Elementary Language Arts Methods class in fall 2019 at a mid-sized university in the southeastern United States, there was not a laptop in sight. Rather, there were “old school” composition books, markers, scissors, glue, and pieces of colored paper scattered across tables. Pre-service teachers, mostly 19–24-year-old females, were actively engaged with the materials as they made sense of new literacy content and methodologies through various writing activities, many of these in the form of “functional writing” utilizing lists and graphic organizers (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017), to use with elementary aged students, as illustrated in Figures 1-5. Students were, in essence, “writing to learn” in order to enhance their own understanding and retention of course materials (Doğan & İlhan, 2016; Pinar & Yildiz, 2020). Writing to learn was a staple in my class, and my use of “old school” interactive journals was a way for students to document and capture their learning in one place. I successfully taught college level content in ways that mirrored the best practices of elementary teachers, and the feedback I received from students was overwhelmingly positive. I knew it would be critical to maintain this effective practice of writing

to learn with my students, and I was determined to find a way to mimic this practice in a virtual setting.

Figure 1: Composition Journal Entry Matching Genres to Texts

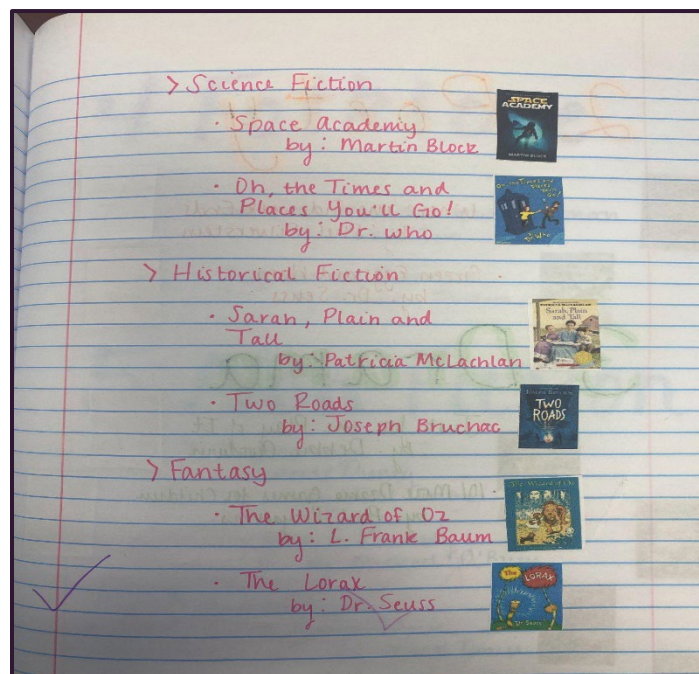


Figure 2: Composition Journal Entry Notes on Genres of Writing

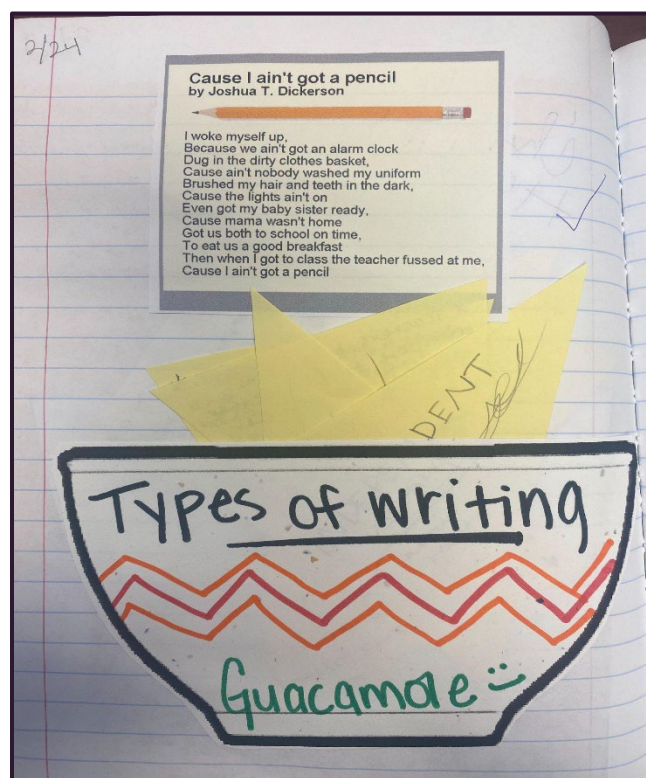


Figure 3: Composition Journal Entry Sequencing Steps of an Interactive Read Aloud

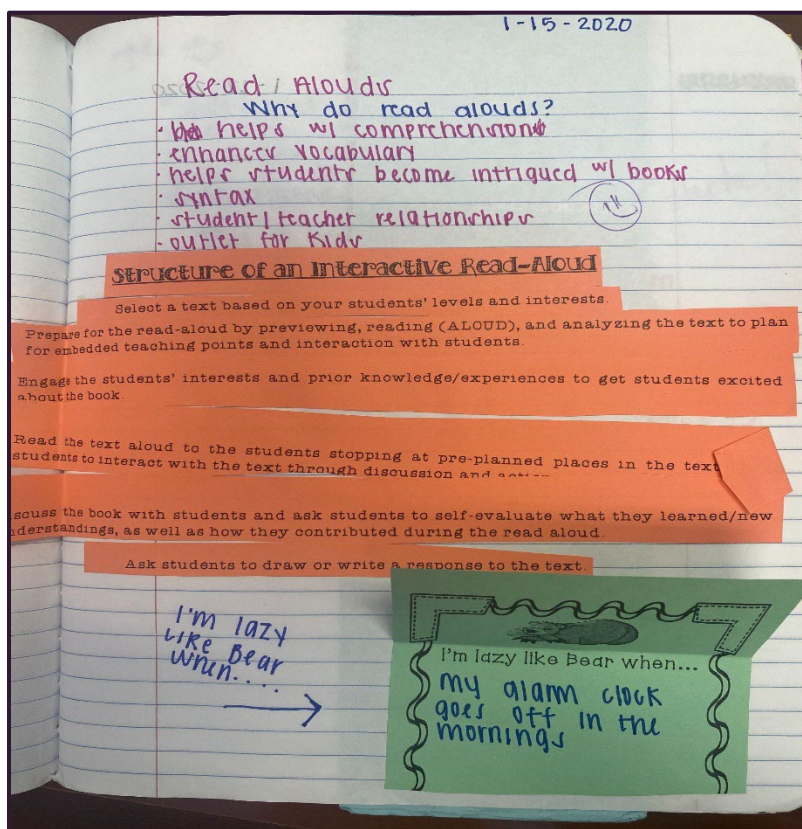


Figure 4: Composition Journal Entry Making Connection to Elements of Language Arts

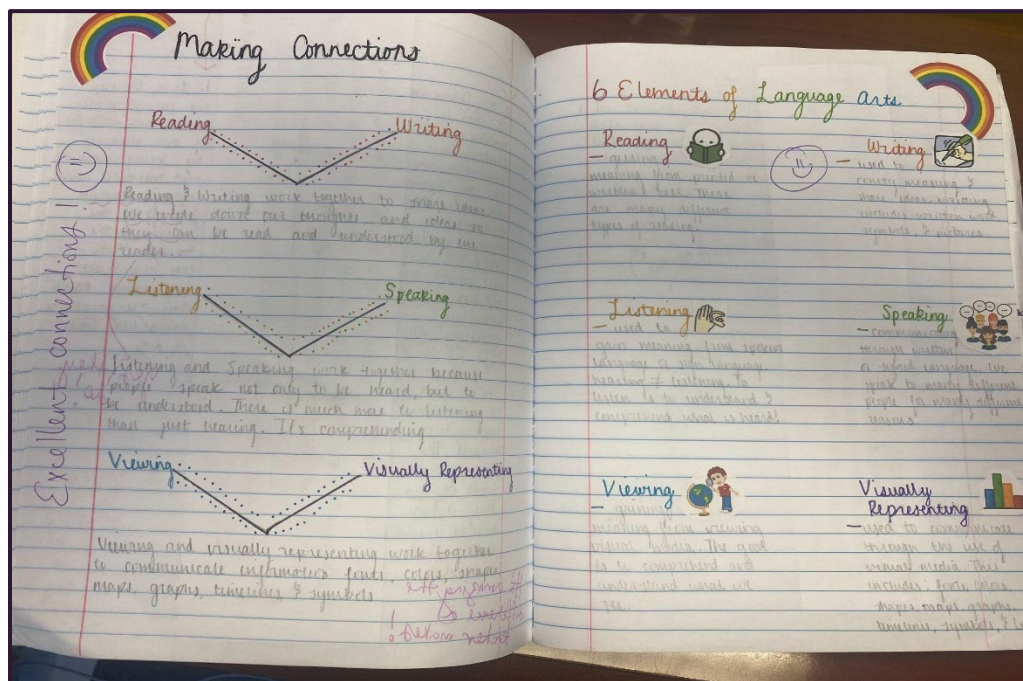
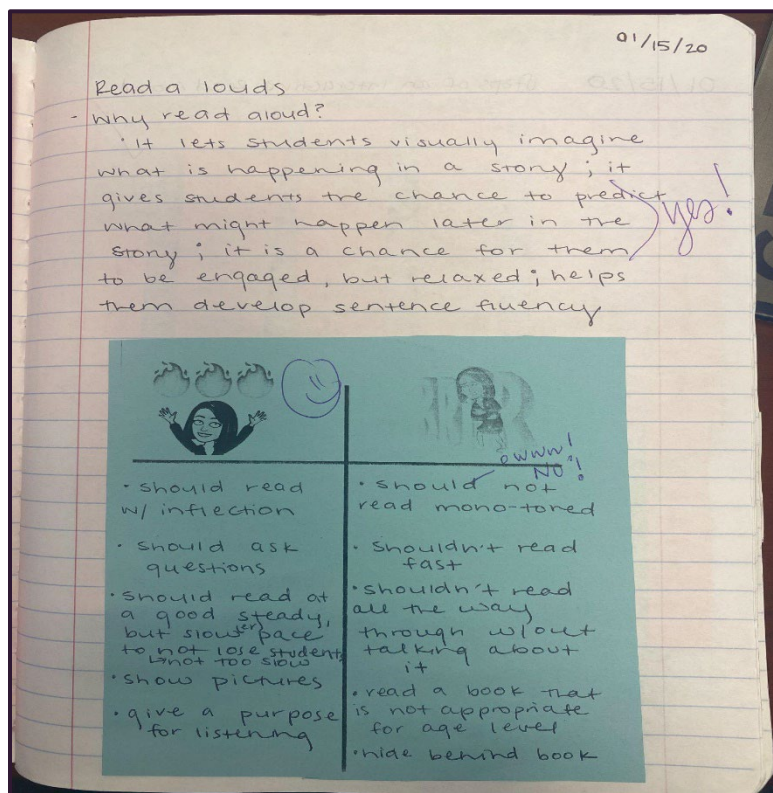


Figure 5: Composition Journal Entry Matching T-Chart Comparing “What’s Hot and What’s Not” with Interactive Read Alouds

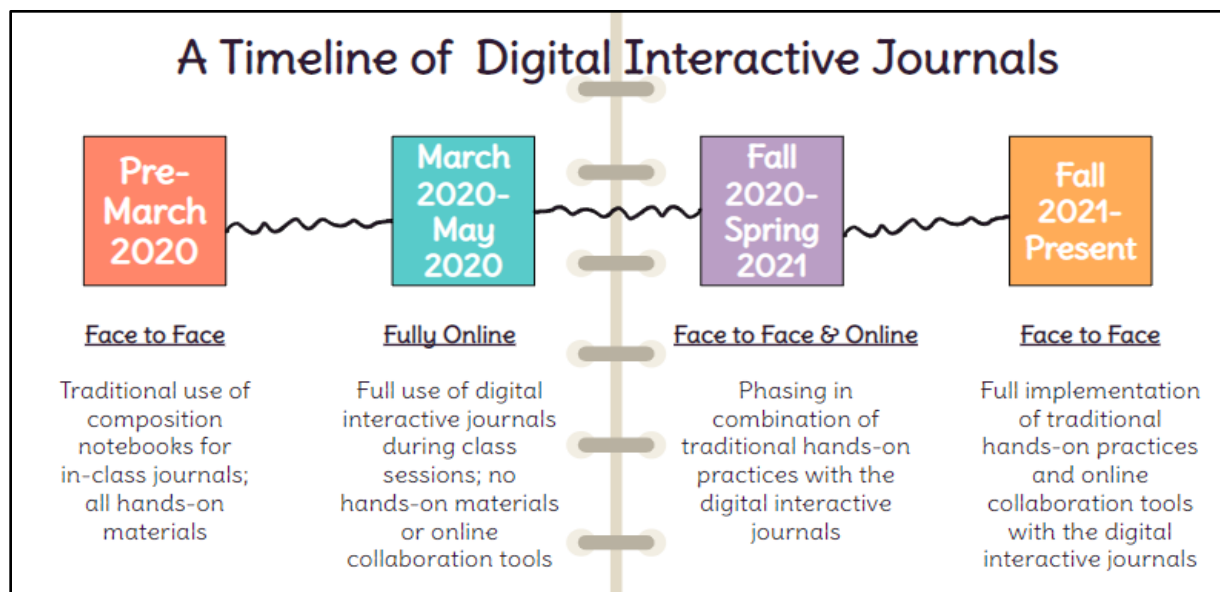


The Evolution of Digital Interactive Journals

Then COVID-19 struck 2020 and changed everything my students and I knew as “normal” teaching in face-to-face classroom settings. This was quite the paradox, and just like K-12 teachers had no choice but to change their teaching modalities to best support the whole child (Chamberlain et al., 2020), teacher educators had to change as well in order to best support the whole teacher (Crawford, 2016). This incited the reimagination of “old school” journals and the evolution of digital interactive journals. I began to wonder about the ways I could adjust our class sessions and daily interactive journals in a fully digital world while maintaining some semblance of normalcy in an *anything but normal* world.

I selected Google Slides as a substitute for the traditional handwritten interactive journals as the platform because all students have access to Google Workspace through the university, its commenting feature allows for dialogue between student and instructor, and can be accessed on any device through Google Drive.

Over a two-year period, my classes slowly transitioned from traditional face to face classes to fully virtual classes to a hybrid of face to face classes and virtual learning and, finally, to the return to fully face to face classes (Figure 6). Even though my students and I found ourselves learning in a fully face-to-face setting once again, I quickly realized there was no going back to the “old school journals”; digital interactive journals were a welcomed change and were here to stay.

Figure 6: Timeline of the Evolution of Digital Interactive Journals

Digital Interactive Journals in Practice

Digital interactive journals have become the heart of our classroom on campus. Journal entries each day consist of a wide array of activities. Students often critically research and hyperlink teaching ideas related to content covered (Figure 7), jump into a class Jamboard for collaborative work and brainstorming (Figures 8 & 9), complete Google Forms to showcase class data sets of school experiences, read and reflect on articles (Figure 10), blogs, and videos (Figure 11), and embed their own videos, images, and gifs to make blank slides, their empty canvas, in their journals come alive. In essence, their journal entries look more like an artistic scrapbook of learning and learning to teach, as opposed to more traditional college projects and papers. While the majority of journal entries are digital, I have been able to preserve some of the traditional practices of interactive journals where students are able to cut, glue, draw or color, and hand write reflections. Upon completing these in-class hands-on activities, students use their devices to take photographs of the products they create and upload the images into their interactive journals (Figures 12 & 13) or create a combination of these more traditional practices digitally (Figure 14). It is also important to note that while the students' writing is more condensed and presented in more of a non-traditional manner, I have seen growth in the depth of their written reflections and in their writing skills (Clark et al., 2020). The students are incredibly proud of their journals and often tell me how much creating them has helped them grow as teachers. They are elated when they are able to teach their peers and even their own cooperating teacher in their field placement new "tricks" and shortcuts to use. So, not only are they learning essential methods to teach language arts, they are also learning essential digital tools that are enhancing their own teaching skill set and the skill sets of others.

Figure 7: Student Journal Entry in Slides: Hyperlinking Phonological Awareness Activities



Figure 8: Class Jamboard: Pictures, Images, and Clipart that Start with /s/



Figure 9: Class Jamboard: Sticky Notes Representing What Students Learned in Class



Figure 10: Student Journal Entry in Slides: 3-2-1 Reflection over Assigned Text to Read

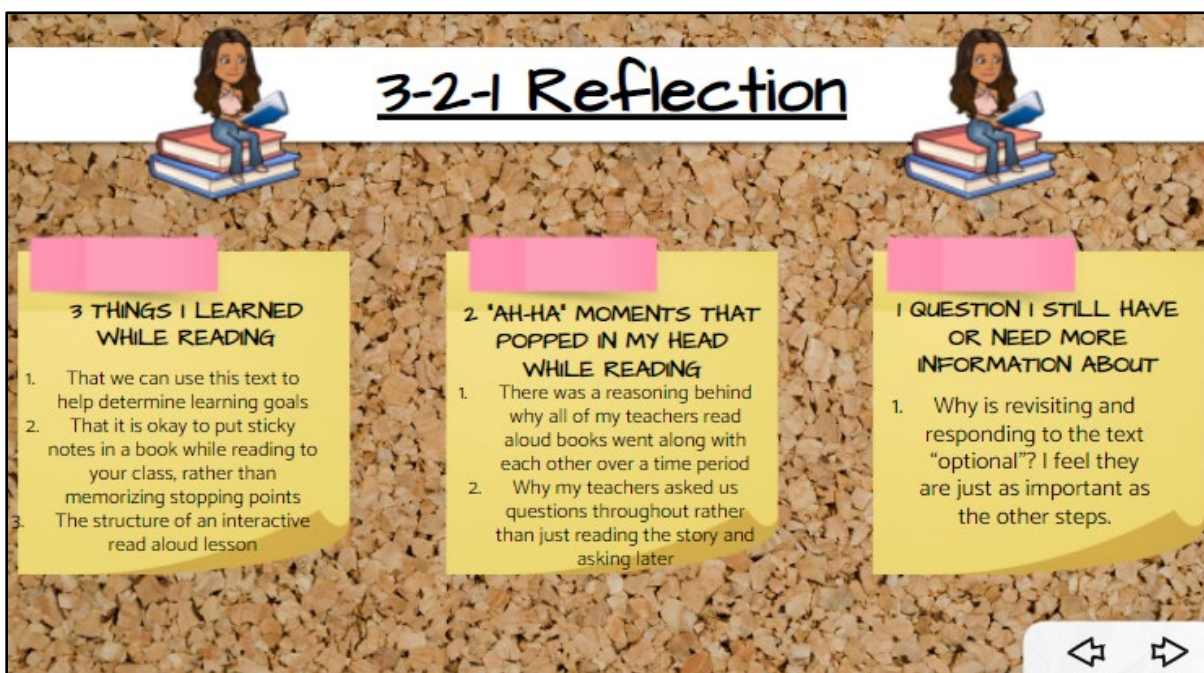


Figure 11: Student Journal Entry in Slides: Text Messages to a Friend after Watching a TED Talk

TEXT A FRIEND

What are three things you can share with a friend about [this TED Talk](#)?

Read Alouds allow students to visualize what is being read to them. It takes away the hard part of decoding and figuring out vocabulary so they can "get inside the book."

Read alouds give students access to books and knowledge that they may not choose to read or have access to. Read aloud books can serve as windows and mirrors for our students.

Read alouds help take time away from technology and allow for teachers or parents to connect with the children.

Figure 12: Student Journal Entry in Slides: Uploaded Images of Assessing Writing Three Ways

ASSESSING WRITING: GROUP WORK TIME!

MY WEEKEND WITH JUST A GRADE

MY WEEKEND WITH WRITTEN FEEDBACK

MY WEEKEND SCORED RUBRIC

Figure 13: Student Journal Entry in Slides: Uploaded Images of Planning for an Interactive Read Aloud

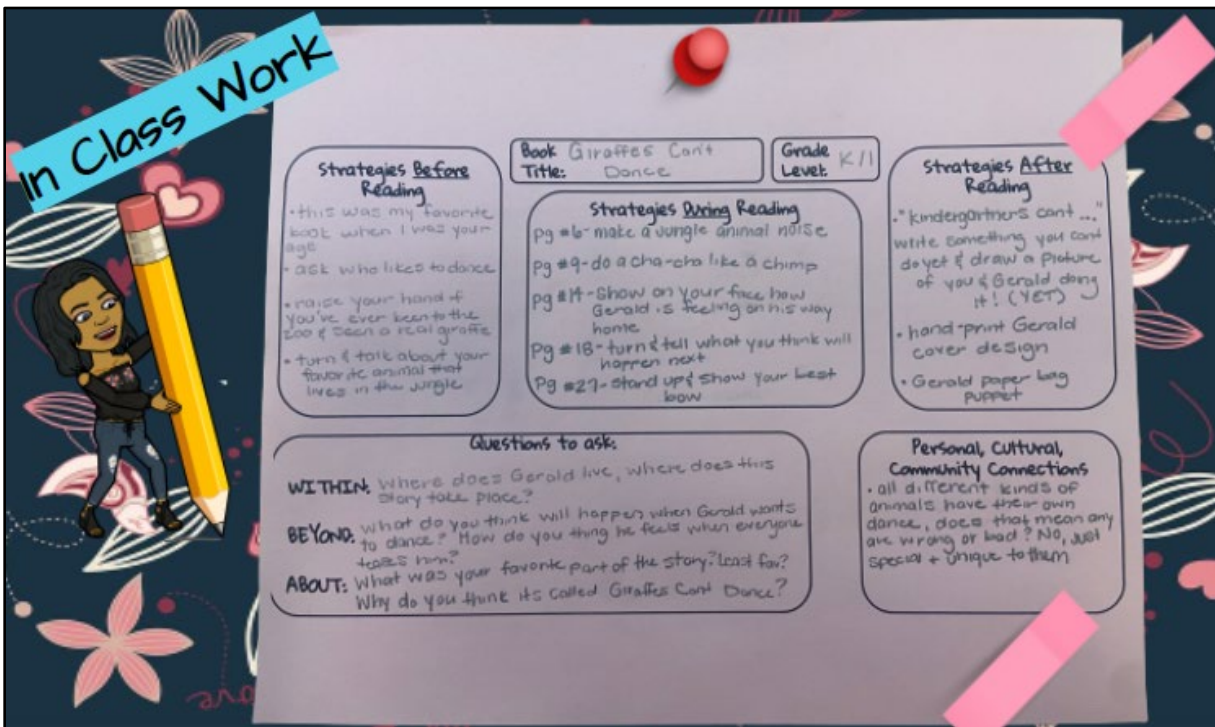
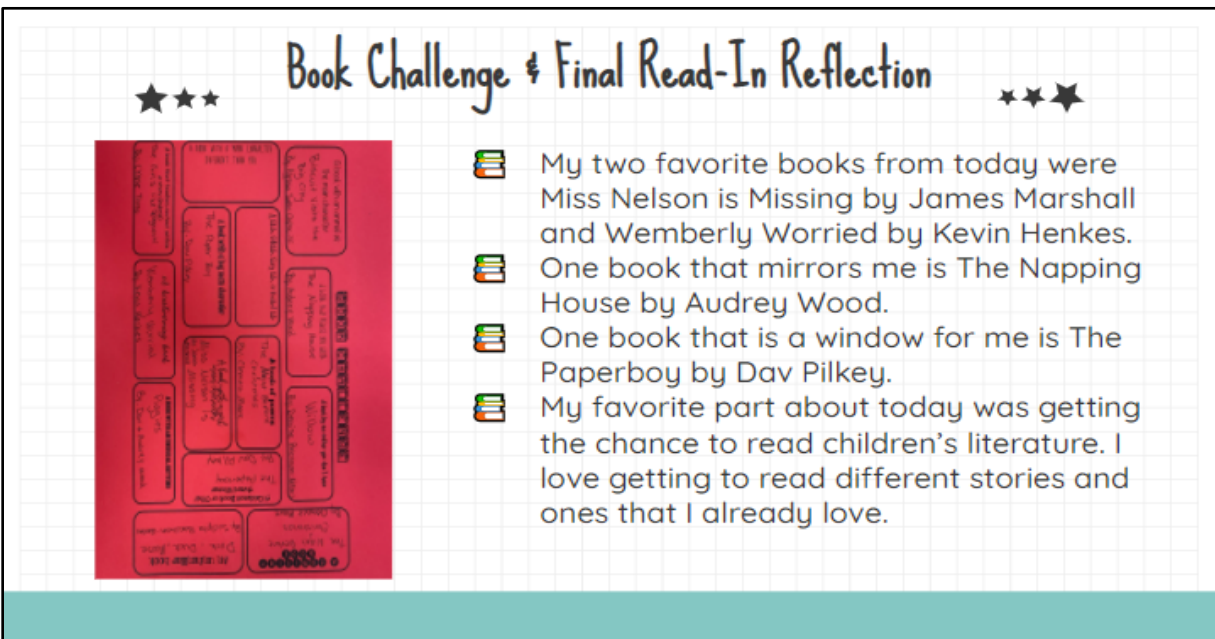


Figure 14: Student Journal Entry in Slides: Uploaded Image of Graphic Organizer and Bulleted Reflection



Launching Digital Interactive Journals

Each semester I have modified the way in which I introduce the digital interactive journal. Upon initial implementation, I mistakenly made too many assumptions about my students' familiarity with Google Slides and all of its functions. Therefore, I have learned the importance of beginning the first week of classes with in-class activities that involve the basics of Google Slides, including selecting a template for their journal using websites such as slidesgo.com and slidesmania.com. My favorite introductory activity in class has been a "scavenger hunt" where the students complete tasks, after I model them, such as using the drawing tool, inserting images and embedding videos, hyperlinking websites to images and text, adding animation, changing the background and slide layout, and, their favorite, inserting their personalized bitmojis. Each of the activities in the scavenger hunt involve *getting to know you* prompts, such as:

- Insert an image of your favorite food and hyperlink a recipe to the image
- Insert a shape of your choice and fill in the shape with your favorite color. In the shape tell me about your best friend or pet. Now, make the shape spin.
- Make a bulleted list of your favorite restaurants. Now, right click the top bullet, select "more bullets" and change the bullet points to a food emoji of your choice.
- Copy and paste Slide 23 from my slideshow into your journal. Change the font size, type, and color. Now, add in an image of a famous person you'd like to meet. Want to remove the background of the famous person? Go to remove.bg - it's magical!
- Using a combination of images, gifs, memes, and videos, create a digital collage of your go to Netflix, Hulu, Disney+, and HBO Max shows.
- Go outside and take a selfie at your favorite place on campus. Now, insert the picture and a textbox to describe why it's your favorite place.

Not only are students able to learn how to easily navigate Slides on their own, I am also able to spend this time getting to know my students and building our classroom community in order to give them a greater sense of belonging in a college classroom (Kirby & Thomas, 2021). Once students are able to easily and quickly operate the basic functions of Google Slides with minimal support, class sessions run smoothly, and students are able to place their focus on the content of the course rather than "stressing out" about not being able to figure out the technological tools and feeling behind or rushed during class.

Through the implementation of digital interactive journals, I have learned how to effectively blend traditional hands-on practices with digital tools to maximize student learning and engagement and to capture the growth of my pre-service teachers' understanding of best literacy practices with in-class activities and prompts such as the ones presented in the above figures and the additional examples listed below:

- Insert a Venn diagram in your journal to compare and contrast interactive read alouds with shared reading.
- Jump into this Jamboard and insert an image that has /ă/ as the medial sound. Now, copy/paste that same image into your journal and insert an additional picture.
- As you watch this writers workshop video, create a bulleted list of key ideas and/or questions you have in your journal. Be ready to discuss.

- Complete this planning for guided reading graphic organizer (hard copy). When you're finished, take a picture and insert it into your journal. Add the title of your selected book at the top of the slide and insert a picture of the book cover.
- Reflect on your experiences with spelling. What do you remember? Were your experiences positive or negative? Insert an image to match.

As students submit their interactive journals throughout the semester, I am able to use the comment feature to provide immediate feedback that students can easily access in live time. The comment feature allows me to praise quality work, clarify any misconceptions, quickly answer questions students pose, provide additional resources through hyperlinks. I am also able to insert a variety of emojis to personalize my comments and make the feedback feel more like cognitive coaching (Costa & Garmston, 2002) and a conversation, rather than a “yes/no, right/wrong, here’s your grade” (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Personalized Instructor Feedback in Digital Interactive Journal

Three • Two • One Reading Reflection

Three Things You Learned:

THREE!

- Optimal time for shared reading is 10 minutes a day (most of my teachers didn't do this at all)
- If you can't find large print books, you can use a document camera
- With shared reading, students actually read the text with you the second time

Two Connections You Made:

TWO!

- I remember having one teacher use the large-print book. It was so much fun!
- My teacher has done this with a document camera. However, she didn't allow students to read with her.

ONE! One Question You Still Have OR Something You Want to Know More About:

ONE!

- How many teachers know about this/actually do this? (it is a great idea, but I haven't seen many use it)

I think it's because shared reading is often associated with younger grades - it tends to taper off around 2nd grade. With that said, I KNOW my 4th and 5th graders LOVED it. 🤔

Big books: I got you! 📚

<https://shop.scholastic.com/teachers-e-commerce/teacher/shops/big-book-collections.html>

As a reflective practitioner, I consistently seek feedback from my teacher candidates when teaching or trying new strategies. I collected feedback through Google forms, and my teacher candidates had very positive statements about the digital interactive journals. Many indicated that the digital journals provided them with a resource that will be useful in their future classrooms. “I like that I will always be able to refer back to these when I'm creating lessons and even when I have my own classroom I'll be able to use this as a resource because of how accessible it is.” Students also enjoyed the personalization aspect of the digital journals and preparation to utilize technology to enhance learning. “I can make it MY way! It also has prepared me so much technology wise.” Given the positive feedback I received from my students, I have shared this

teaching strategy with other colleagues, and we have since embedded this practice in other undergraduate and graduate courses. Author 2 and I collaboratively plan and use digital interactive journals in multiple literacy courses within our teacher education program. In Table 1, we outline general steps to begin using digital interactive journals in other content areas and contexts.

Table 1: Getting Started with Digital Interactive Journals

Step 1	Familiarize yourself with the fundamentals of Google Slides, and avoid asking your students to try different functionalities without first having tried them yourself. For more information about the basic of Google Slides, you can access the following website: bit.ly/3XmWiRC
Step 2	Baby steps. Start slowly and have patience; remember, the students are not only showing their understanding and acquisition of content, but they are also learning the fundamentals and functionalities of technology, even as digital natives.
Step 3	Ensure students have equitable access to technological devices and connectivity.
Step 4	Use the digital interactive journals each class session. For two sample class sessions, access the following links: bit.ly/3S4ROhP , bit.ly/3YnGyz9
Step 5	Let students give peer technical support; they often have new and different ways of completing activities that they can share with other students.
Step 6	Maintain your focus when assessing the journals and providing feedback. Remember that you are assessing the content of their journal entries and their learning, not their technological capabilities or aesthetic appeal.
Step 7	When providing feedback using the commenting tool, make it conversational, rather than corrective, to help build and sustain relationships with your students. Some sample comment stems are as follows: ▪ <i>I like how you _____.</i> ▪ <i>Have you considered _____?</i> ▪ <i>I remember you saying this in class – what other connections can you make?</i> ▪ <i>This reminds me of _____.</i> ▪ <i>Yes! For more information, check out this link: _____.</i> ▪ <i>LOL – so true. We’re going to talk more about this in class next week!</i> ▪ <i>Try it out! Open one of your student’s assignments, and see where you could easily embed comments such as the ones above.</i>
Step 8	Insert hyperlinks or additional resources to build on or clarify student content knowledge when providing feedback.
Step 9	Let students be creative - they will surprise you when given the opportunity to derail from the norm of paper and pencil in-class activities and assessments.
Step 10	Reflect. What is working? What should be adjusted? Not sure? Go to the direct source. Ask your students for some feedback!

Final Thoughts and Lessons Learned

Digital interactive journals have been a game changer in my Elementary Language Arts class, and I am confident that these practices could easily be adapted by teachers across grade levels and

content areas to keep students engaged (Gebre et al., 2014) and to ensure they are writing to learn throughout the semester. As with all teaching practices, it is important to remember to stop, reflect, and adjust when starting this strategy; digital interactive journals will not go perfectly at first, but the end result, their treasured digital keepsakes, is well worth the effort for both students and teachers. This classroom practice can be best summarized with one teacher candidate saying, “Thank you, Author 1, for introducing these journals to us. I’ve never done anything like this in a college class, and I feel like I’ve learned more in your class than any other. The journal has helped me stay organized, let me be creative (yay slides.go and bitmojis!), and taught me soooo much about Google Slides. I’ll hold on to this FOREVER, and I can’t wait to try this with students of my own!”

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